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ABSTRACT

This report presents results of a study concerning institutional support provided to overseas students studying at institutions of higher and further education in Scotland. The study examined three related sets of issues: (1) academic arrangements (information about programs, courses, induction, timetables, tutoring arrangements); (2) institutional infrastructure (staffing, welcome arrangements, special teaching facilities), and (3) ongoing support for overseas students (cultural awareness, pastoral care, and specific issues like housing). The study was based on materials collected from institutions and interviews with institutional staff and students. The overall conclusion was that Scotland's further and higher education institutions are generally doing a good job in providing for the needs of overseas students. Other findings indicated a good match between perceptions of staff and students of the issues; notable differences between larger and smaller institutions, with larger institutions attracting more overseas students and providing more formal support systems; notable differences between the needs of undergraduates and postgraduates; a problem with the timing of induction and orientation sessions; and the need to provide better advance information to students. Questionnaires and detailed analysis are appended. (Contains 14 references.) (DB)

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Institutional Support for Overseas Students in Scotland

John Hall
Sheila Hamilton
Stuart Hall
Jamie Pitcairn

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Institutional Support for Overseas Students in Scotland

John Hall
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Jamie Pitcairn

SCRE
The Scottish Council for Research in Education

SCRE Research Report No 87

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Foreword

scottish education training

I have been privileged to act as Chairman of *Scottish Education and Training* since it was inaugurated in December 1996. *Scottish Education and Training* includes a wide range of representatives from sectors and bodies interested in the overseas promotion of our distinctive education and training systems. One of the main aims it has identified has been to increase the recruitment of overseas students by higher education institutions, further education colleges, English language and independent schools in Scotland. Overseas students greatly enrich the lives of our institutions and our domestic students, and also benefit the local economy and community. There is real potential to increase the number of overseas students at our institutions despite the current financial difficulties in some areas. We have much to offer – a safe and beautiful country with a mild climate and friendly people, and a distinctive and highly respected education system. The experience of recent missions by *Scottish Education and Training* to Argentina and South Africa is that we should not underestimate the attractiveness of these attributes to those thinking of studying overseas.

The *Scottish Education and Training* group were particularly aware in proposing this research that the attraction of large numbers of overseas students to Scotland brings with it the responsibility to ensure they benefit fully from their time here and are able to report high levels of satisfaction with the services they receive. The findings of this research report emphasise the future dividends we can reap from such an approach: personal recommendation from satisfied friends and colleagues is the single most powerful influence in persuading future generations of overseas students to come to Scotland. I commend this research to institutional readers on its intrinsic merits, but also as a referee against which it is possible to conduct a self-critical appraisal of the performance of one's own institution. For example some of the issues which the report will prompt us to check and confirm in my own institution are: how well do we deal with overseas students who arrive outwith office hours; how well do our staff appreciate the culture shock experienced by a young person arriving from abroad to study in Scotland; how well are our overseas students integrated into our student and local communities; how good are our customer care skills; and so on.

THE SCOTTISH OFFICE
Education and Industry Department

SCOTTISH TRADE INTERNATIONAL
building Scotland's exports

I sense a growing acceptance of the merits of the proactive and generic approach adopted by Scottish Education and Training to overseas marketing and of the fact that our real competitors in the vast international market place for pupils and students are not each other but other major players such as Australia and the United States. I take this opportunity to comment on behalf of the group not just the collaborative approach to overseas marketing of Scottish education and training but also rigorous and self-critical scrutiny of the quality of service we provide to our overseas students once in Scotland.

I am particularly grateful to Professor John Phillips of Glasgow Caledonian University, who represents the Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals on *Scottish Education and Training*, for his work in chairing the Advisory Committee for the research

Professor Sir Graeme Davies
Principal
University of Glasgow

COSHEP

Association of Scottish Colleges
The Voice of Scotland's Colleges

SCOTTISH COUNCIL OF S·C·I·S INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

The British Council

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our thanks to all those who have helped us along the way. The project has presented the research team with many challenges and targets to meet within a tight time scale.

In particular, we are indebted to all the members of the Advisory Committee for their guidance and advice. We would like to thank the staff at the selected HE institutions and FE Colleges who worked so hard to facilitate student interviews on our behalf and gave of their time to provide information and views. We would also wish to express our thanks to other agencies (including OSPREY, British Council, Scottish Education and Training, STRATOS and the Victoria League), who provided information, advice and documentation.

We are especially grateful to the many students who came to interviews and shared their experiences in such a personal way. Indeed it was in many ways a two way process. Many of them thanked *us* for giving them the opportunity to speak more 'English', to meet Scottish people and also to help them to assess their experience here in Scotland.

We also acknowledge our sincere and grateful thanks to Kay Young, the project secretary, for her help and support. Thanks also go to Dr Joan Cutting, The School of Social and International Studies, University of Sunderland, for help in data gathering and to Iain Pitcairn for assistance in data analysis.

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1: Introduction

This study was commissioned by The Scottish Office in association with Scottish Education and Training to review institutional support for overseas students in Scotland from both the institutional and student perspectives. The main focus of the study is overseas students in higher education at HE institutions and FE colleges. Some consideration is also given to the experience and practice of English language schools and independent schools.

Scottish Education and Training was set up in December 1996 and comprises a wide range of education and training interests, including higher, further and vocational education, English language teaching and independent schools, together with representatives of Scottish Trade International, the British Council, the Scottish Qualifications Authority and The Scottish Office. As one of Scottish Education and Training's main aims is to promote the recruitment of overseas students by the education and training sectors in Scotland, Scottish Education and Training suggested to The Scottish Office that research into good practice in relation to support for overseas students would be of value to institutions. There is a general recognition of the need to assess the effectiveness of provision for overseas students through the perceptions and experiences of overseas students themselves.

This report was produced with this in mind. The research was carried out over a period of four months from March 1998. It was a tight timetable within which to collect documentation and information from a variety of sources and conduct analyses of a series of interviews. An Advisory Committee was set up to oversee the project with representatives from the Scottish Office, HE institutions and FE colleges and Scottish Education and Training.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the study was to establish the extent to which the practice of educational institutions in providing information and support to 'full fee' students from outside the EU is matched by the perceptions of those students. In doing so, it will enable 'good practice' to be identified and disseminated throughout all the relevant educational sectors. There were four key research aims:

- to establish the existing practice in all significant institutions in the HE and FE sectors receiving international students, in English Language Schools and in independent schools
- to ascertain the perceived needs of incoming students and the extent to which perceived needs are met by existing practices in Scottish institutions
- to explore the extent of provision in the pre-arrival, arrival and continuing support stages
- to determine best practice through consideration of issues of cost and effectiveness.

The areas of institutional activity where 'good practice' can be located are: staffing levels, literature, student contact before arrival, pre-arrival information, 'meeting and greeting' services, culturalisation processes, induction process, availability and access to suitable accommodation and general support in the early settling-in stages.

In each of these areas, there are three related sets of issues concerning firstly, those directly related to **academic arrangements** (information about programmes, courses, induction, timetable, tutor arrangements); secondly, issues which relate to the **institutional infrastructure** (staffing, welcome arrangements, special teaching facilities) and thirdly, the early and ongoing **support for overseas students** through cultural awareness, pastoral care and specific issues like accommodation. These apply to the three phases of the student's experience: pre-arrival, arrival and continuing support.

Background to research

This section examines the background to the recruitment of overseas students, dealing firstly with the statistical picture and some general comments about the institutional perspective. Some consideration is given to the role of English language schools and independent schools. The levels of advice and support available to institutions and students completes the general background context to this study.

Definition of overseas students

Overseas students are defined, for the purposes of this study, as non-European Union students paying full fees. (This will include students in Europe outwith the European Union as well as students from overseas). Whether the student is self-financing, funded by national government or other agency/sponsor, the significance of paying full fees is crucial in terms of the expectations of a certain level of 'customer care' from both the recipient's point of view and also that of the provider. It should be noted that the term 'international' is used more commonly by HE institutions and FE colleges to describe all categories of foreign students, including European.

Setting the scene - the numbers of overseas students

The pattern of recruitment of international students and in particular overseas students by HE and FE institutions in Scotland for 1996-7 has revealed some significant statistics (SOEID *Bulletin on Student Domicile Statistics 1996-7*). While there are many more detailed statistics which will be of interest to individual institutions, the following are the most significant for the present study:

- there were 15,053 overseas students (ie 'other overseas' and 'other Europeans', by domicile, full-time and part-time) in higher education in Scotland. This figure represents 6.3% of the total number of students in higher education in Scotland for 1996-7.
- 5.8% (7,202) of all new entrants were overseas students.

- almost two thirds of overseas students (9,817) were undertaking postgraduate courses, the majority of whom (6,852) were male.
- FE colleges had the lowest number of overseas students in higher education with 405. Figures supplied by the SOEID FE Statistics Branch indicate that 1,871 overseas students were taking FE courses at FE colleges. These are not included in the domicile statistics.

Another notable feature of the statistical background on overseas students is the dominance in numerical terms of the four universities of Heriot-Watt, Strathclyde, Edinburgh and Glasgow. (There were 4,681 overseas (non-European) students at Heriot-Watt University, accounting for 45.5% of all their students in 1996-97. This high figure includes some 4,300 students from overseas who were undertaking their course of study from their own country. These are outwith the remit of the current study.)

In the most recent academic year, 1997-8, provisional figures indicate an overall increase of almost 8.6% on the numbers of non-EU students compared to 1996-7.

In addition, the Scottish International Foundation Programme (SIFP) provides a range of pre-degree courses for international students to gain qualifications for entry to degree courses. In 1997-98, 80 students were enrolled with SIFP and a significant number of these will go on into Scottish higher education.

As providers of education, Scottish universities and colleges have systems and structures to recruit, admit, welcome and educate all students. For the number of overseas students, as for all students, much is provided in the way of support. The level of provision for overseas students will depend on the numbers of international students, the priority given by individual institutions to international recruitment and the nature of education provided by individual institutions. There is considerable variation in how institutions deal with their international students across all levels from induction, orientation, welfare, social and ongoing support. These will be examined in detail in Chapter 3.

Language schools

There is a wide variety of provision for English Language teaching in Scotland across independent schools, HE and FE and specialist schools in the private sector. These offer a wide range of courses and programmes in terms of duration and type (short term part-time, full time specialist). In a report by Inter-ed Ltd *Strategic Analysis of the Scottish education sector's performance in the international market place* (1997) (p36) 28 centres in Scotland were identified with some professional accreditation or status.

The main accrediting bodies are:

- English in Britain Accreditation Scheme for English Language Teaching institutions managed by British Council (with ARELS and BASELT)

- ARELS (The Association of Recognised English Language Services)
- BASELT (the British Association of State English Language Teaching)
- BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes)

In 1993, the Scottish English Language Teaching in Consortium (SELTIC) was set up. In providing support, guidance and networking the consortium aims to provide quality of provision and 'total commitment to the development and well-being of every student'. With nine members representing most of the main providers of English Language teaching, their initiatives focus on information sharing and some collaboration. The Inter-ed Report indicated more could be done in this area to exploit existing provision.

The statistics for many of the institutions offering short-term ESL courses are difficult to extract satisfactorily from the available compiled statistical information. However, in FE colleges it is interesting to note the figures for 1996-1997 were as follows (provided by SOEID, FE Statistics Branch):

- 15 students were on HE courses within FE colleges (9 EU and 6 non-EU)
- 1514 students were on FE courses in FE colleges, many of them on shorter courses (891 EU and 623 non EU).

The issues for international students are very much concerned with whether English language teaching is pre-sessional, ongoing, optional, free and related to courses of study.

Independent schools

The issue of foreign pupils in independent schools is one which has a bearing on the general area of student recruitment from overseas to attend higher education institutions. A recent questionnaire survey, *Foreign Pupils in Independent schools,* which was carried out in 1997 by the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), revealed the potential importance of independent schools as a recruitment gateway into higher education. The survey, which is reported in the Inter-ed Report, *Strategic Analysis of the Scottish education sector's performance in the international market place* (1997) showed that there were 429 foreign pupils in 25 independent schools and over 80% of these pupils were from non-EU countries. Provision of English Language was also a key aspect of the independent school provision. The survey also indicated that many of the pupils were moving into higher education beyond Scotland and that there was potential to forge closer links between boarding schools in Scotland and the Scottish higher education sector. In addition the role of FE was also seen as an area to develop multiple routes into HE which could promote and encourage additional overseas student recruitment.

Beyond this, there are significant differences in the issues which overseas pupils face compared to overseas students. There is much more focus on issues of 'guardianship' and the recent *Guidelines on Guardianship* (1998) published by the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) highlights some of the issues for

foreign pupils, the most important one being the need for personal support to be provided by boarding schools in the absence of parents for all foreign students but recognising the particular needs of those where English is not the first language.

There is less emphasis on a separate profile of foreign pupils in the independent school sector because integration of pupils into the school community is more important. However, there may be parallels in marketing strategies and provision of information as well as additional support provision for foreign pupils or issues being addressed in this sector which have parallels to the HE and FE sector (eg cultural allowances like providing prayer rooms for Muslims).

Guidelines and agencies for support

Institutions in HE and FE already have a number of guidelines for good practice and emphasis on standards, reflecting the growing concern for 'customer care' towards international students.

- CVCP (1995) Code of Practice *Recruitment and Support of International Students in UK Higher Education*
- British Council (1995)*The British Council Code of Practice. For educational institutions and overseas students*
- UKCOSA, Good Practice Series

In addition, there are many different bodies throughout the UK providing support and advice to the staff in institutions who provide welfare and support services and to international students who seek advice or information. This operates at informal and formal levels with activity taking place within institutions, between institutions and between institutions and agencies. For example, an institution may use the same organisation for staff training, advice on marketing, policy and procedures as well as for seeking advice on behalf of individual students. The following summarise the main organisation where support and advice can be found:

The British Council

The British Council plays a leading and invaluable role in providing advice and information, in promoting good practice in international student welfare and in commenting on Government policy as it affects international students.

The Council's activity in this area includes:

- the Education Counselling service which is a partnership between the British Council and member institutions who are actively involved in recruiting overseas students.
- *Steps to Success. A guide for International students in the UK* (booklet and video pack) published by the British Council providing advice to international students prior to departure. In addition, the British Council publication, *Studying and living in Britain* (1997) is a key starting point for any student coming to the UK from overseas.

- the UK Regional Network (UKRN) which provides support to international students studying in the UK on scholarship programmes managed by the British Council and works with local and national bodies (eg HOST) on programmes of support to international students. The Council maintains an International Student Services Unit (ISSU) who provide expert advice to the UKRN and Welfare Services to the British Council's international students.
- a Beacon Award provided by the British Council to the Further Education sector in recognition of best practice in international student support by meeting a range of criteria.

UKCOSA: The Council for International Education

This membership organisation provides information and advice to international students in the UK and to professionals who work with them. UKCOSA is seen as the main UK body to contact for specialist advice and support and runs courses and conferences. 'It acts as a focus for the exchange of ideas and the development of policies on international education'. It also provides a series of publications and training materials for staff as well as leaflets on essential topics of interest to international students (UKCOSA, *Guidance notes for students 1997-8*). Thus UKCOSA provides a useful range of services and information to institutions who subscribe.

Regional Organisations

As well as organisations which deal with more specific issues such as immigration, there are more regional-based organisations which may provide a more 'local' point of contact. For example, the Consortium of Care, a forum organisation based in the West Midlands, promotes the exchange of ideas and collaborative projects, runs training days, conferences and offers support to staff. One of its main objectives is to 'increase awareness of staff who are involved in the care of international students'. While there are no Scottish members at the present time, there have been recent contacts with individual professionals in Scotland.

Organisations in Scotland

Many, if not all, the Scottish HE and FE institutions feed into some of the bodies listed above or will have liaison, representation or membership. The British Council play a significant role in Scotland in providing a focus for institutions and wider guidance on general issues although much of their activities will focus on the needs of their own British Council students.

The British Council Scotland works closely with education providers and related bodies to further international developments and links as well as the promotion of Scottish education. British Council Scotland and Scottish Trade International jointly fund the secretariat for Scottish Education and Training an initiative to raise awareness of the Scottish education capability in overseas markets. The Scottish International Resource Programme (SIRP) is another joint partnership with Scottish Trade International which provides opportunities for

SIRP Associates ('professionals from overseas currently undertaking postgraduate work') to develop links with the business community in Scotland. British Council Scotland also supports and provides the secretariat for SELTIC (Scottish English Language Teaching in Consortium).

The OSPREY International Student Advisory Council plays a key role in providing advice and support to students based in Edinburgh. This is an independent advisory service which provides a free confidential advisory service to students in Edinburgh on a range of welfare issues. Like other organisations, it has more than one role. As well as co-ordinating a Welcome programme and running a welfare and advisory service, OSPREY has close liaison with all the academic institutions in Edinburgh. In addition, its members now include representatives from academic institutions beyond Edinburgh. Training courses are run for staff from institutions and voluntary agencies which address many key areas of concern to overseas students including for example, cultural awareness, immigration and dealing with students' financial difficulties.

OSPREY has become the focal point in Edinburgh for support and advice with a level of expertise which is recognised as being exceptional. It is the only Scottish representative on UKCOSA and maintains links with other significant organisations.

There are other organisations or groups which offer advice or support. The Scottish Universities International Officers Group (SUIOG) is an informal, *ad hoc* group with no formal constitution or membership fee, meeting occasionally to share information and promote discussion. STRATOS (Strathclyde Region Advisers to Overseas Students), based in Glasgow, is an informal forum for student advisers which provides support and information sharing. Training needs are met on an *ad hoc* basis and its effectiveness is based on the close networking of its members. International Officers play a central role in both HE and FE sectors in recruiting and guiding overseas students through all stages of their experience of Scottish education although their role may vary within different universities and colleges (see Chapters 3 and 4).

Wider issues

Recruitment of students in the international market is becoming increasingly competitive. Institutions are increasingly aware of the impact of international marketing on Scottish education. Marketing issues are crucial to decision making in Higher Education institutions and Further Education colleges. Issues about strategies for marketing Scottish education overseas have already been examined in the report by Inter-ed Ltd, *Strategic Analysis of the Scottish education sector's performance in the international market place* (1997) which examined the strengths and weaknesses of the Scottish education sector in the international arena. The current Asian financial crisis is, of course, having a major impact on academic institutions.

The issue of marketing raises questions about the best use of resources and expertise within Scottish Higher Education. The question of co-operative or collaborative strategies in overseas marketing may impinge on the provision of levels of support for overseas students in Scotland. Indeed concern has been expressed recently in government circles that the increasingly competitive nature of international recruitment between institutions in the UK is reducing the effectiveness of the overall promotion of higher education overseas (*The Guardian*, 9/6/98). Informal agreements and combining of resources do occur from time to time between some academic institutions in Scotland where there may be some sharing of recruitment or attendance at trade fairs overseas where there is no conflict of interest.

To sum up

The significant factors which emerge from this brief background review reveal that:

- there are significant numbers of 'overseas students' in Scottish higher education institutions and to a lesser extent the FE colleges
- there are guidelines and codes of practice in place to focus attention on good practice
- there are UK agencies which provide support and advice for staff and students
- the provision of advice and support in the Scottish context is good but more informal and less 'national'.

Structure of the Report

We now go on to examine institutional support for overseas students from the institutional, staff and student perspectives and present our findings via the evidence from interviews and questionnaires. The report is structured as follows:

- outline of the methodology
- the infrastructure of support for overseas students in institutions
- the staff perspective of institutional support
- the students' views of their experience
- some concluding comments.

2: Methodology

In order to address the aims and objectives of the research, different types of data were required to be gathered in a phased strategy as follows:

Stage One

- collate and analyse the content of relevant materials from those institutions recruiting significant numbers of overseas students
- identify procedures and provision within institutions.

Stage Two

- carry out a series of interviews with institutional staff responsible for overseas students at selected institutions
- carry out interviews with representatives from selected students' associations, overseas students' clubs, and other bodies with overseas student connections
- organise group interviews and individual interviews with overseas students.

Stage One: documentation on policies, procedures and provision

The first stage was to collect and collate the information which is provided for overseas students by institutions. The gathering of this documentation from all HEIs and those FE colleges identified as 'significant', would include a range of materials relevant to overseas students. We also investigated the level of information on Web sites for those institutions with Web pages.

It should be noted that this information may be equally relevant to European students and the descriptive label 'international' is often more accurate to describe the type of information eg; 'international student handbook'. Therefore the terms 'overseas' and 'international' in this context are less rigid. In addition, the levels of information, e.g. on welfare and accommodation, will match what is provided to home students. No comparison has been carried out on the differences between information provided to different categories of students.

In order to obtain the widest possible view of policies and procedures and levels of provision, all HE institutions were contacted to request copies of information provided for overseas students ranging from prospectuses, pre-arrival handbooks, welcome packs, welfare handbooks etc. Given the comparatively small numbers of students in the FE sector, a selection of FE colleges known to be especially active in recruiting overseas students were also contacted. In addition, all these institutions were also sent an information request form to enable us to establish a general impression of how institutions provided information and support. (see Appendix 1)

Analysis was carried out on the range of procedures and policies which institutions adopt. The contents of the documentation which we received from institutions were also analysed.

Stage two: interviews

In order to ascertain the perceived needs of overseas students and the extent to which these needs are met by institutions, a series of interviews were planned with key members of staff, student representatives, officers of students' associations and groups of overseas students. It was thought valuable to obtain views from institutions about their perceptions of student needs.

Given the short time scale of the project, it was agreed that we would target selected institutions for this second stage rather than a full survey of all institutions. In discussion with the Advisory Committee, six (became seven) HE institutions were identified and one (became two) FE colleges. This selection reflected the diversity of HE institutions between older and post-1992 institutions as well as geographical location and levels of recruitment. The two FE colleges were selected according to known reputation but it was recognised that it would be difficult to satisfactorily reflect all FE viewpoints in the limited time scale available. We also sought the views of informed and active organisations who are concerned with the welfare and support of overseas students.

It was clear also from the outset that it would be impossible to carry out a statistically representative sample of student views in each institution by nationality or type of course. The target number which we aimed to interview in a mixture of groups and individual student interviews was 25-30 in each of our selected institutions.

In each institution, we identified and contacted key individuals, either the International Officer, the welfare adviser or overseas student adviser. It became clear at this stage that each institution had its own structure and levels of support. We were entirely dependent on the co-operation of these key individuals to gain access/entry to the institutions. These key individuals acted as facilitators to help identify potential students for interview, sometimes helped to set up interviews and generally advised us on the most appropriate approach. This was all carried out on a very flexible a*d hoc* basis to suit the convenience of students.

These key individuals were also the subject of interview themselves and fieldwork was largely planned to allow us to meet students and staff on the same day.

All interviews (institutional, students representatives and students) were conducted using semi-structured interview schedules covering the main topics identified above concerning pre-arrival, arrival and ongoing support. (Appendices 5-7). They were taped where appropriate and transcriptions or summary transcriptions, in the case of group interviews, were compiled. Students who

attended interviews were asked to complete a student pro-forma sheet which provided useful background information which would be compiled into a student profile of those interviewed. (see Appendix 2) The transcripts were analysed using QSR NUD*IST software which enables systematic analysis of qualitative data.

Progress, problems and solutions

It was always clear given the time scale of the project that there would be a limited window of opportunity to contact and meet with students because of the Easter vacation and examination timetable in the summer session.

This indeed proved to be the case. There were considerable difficulties in arranging interviews as had been originally planned within the project timetable. When interviews were set up, the turn-out in some institutions was extremely disappointing. For example, and this was typical, in one institution a group of 70 potential students were contacted via the Student Association with the invitation to meet us at a time in the early evening with refreshments provided. This produced a response from 4 students. Thereafter, we tried different or repeated approaches to institutions after the initial strategy seemed to produce a poor response. This included making sure we arranged the 'most convenient time' for students, that we did a further leaflet drop and posters ourselves, that we tried to offer refreshments and an informal approach. This approach did provide a further influx of students in some institutions and by the end of the project we had interviewed 98 students from the selected institutions. There were also difficulties in finding representatives from the Student Associations either because of timing or because the positions were not filled.

Given the initial poor response from student interviews, it was felt that there was a need to elicit a wider view of students perceptions about their experiences in Scotland. We had the opportunity to attend the Scottish International Resource Programme (SIRP) Conference (April 1998) where we knew there would be a gathering of overseas postgraduate students. Through the assistance of SIRP we contacted all student delegates (78) and enclosed a very general questionnaire which we invited them to complete and return in a pre-paid envelope. (Appendix 3) This matched the general background information we were gathering from the interviews and also asked them to provide some general comments on their experiences. It was not possible to target only the selected institutions so the responses we received (28) were students from a wider group of institutions. We also spoke to many delegates at the conference which provided a more informal impression of student views. Analysis of these responses are included in Chapter 5.

The use of this questionnaire with the SIRP students suggested it might be possible to supplement the interviews which were proving difficult to arrange. We approached selected institutions to seek the distribution of a questionnaire very similar to that of the SIRP one. (Appendix 4) There were further difficulties in getting it distributed (timing in the term, other demands on institutional staff etc).

The questionnaire was not intended to form a systematic survey of students but it did provide us with 'written' responses which supplemented the more detailed information we were receiving from the interviews. We received a reasonable response of 47 returns.

These two additional levels of 'written' response provided 64 additional student views from our selected institutions and 11 from other institutions in Scotland. Table 2.1 below provides a summary of the staff and student interviews and questionnaires which gave 162 student responses, both verbal and written, as well as interviews with 15 staff. We were also able to pursue more informal contacts with a wives group set up to support wives and families of overseas students, and with support agencies including the Victoria League, OSPREY, STRATOS, SCIS and two independent schools. These contacts provided us with valuable background information.

Table 2.1 Sources of data

Selected institutions	Number of staff interviewed	Number of students interviewed	SIRP	Returned general qu'aires	TOTAL Verbal/written contact with students
HEIs					
HE1	n/a	2 1 spouse	6	22	31
HE2	2	6 3 spouses	0		9
HE3	2	7	6		13
HE4	2	7	2	4	13
HE5	1	3	1	17	21
HE6	2	21	2		23
HE7	1	18	0		18
FE colleges					
FE1	2	17	0		17
FE2	3	4† 9		4	17
Other institutions:			11		11
TOTALS	**15**	**98***	**28**	**47**	**173***

† a group of four foundation programme students attending FE2

* four spouses/partners were interviewed and are included in this figure

From basic analysis of the information recorded in the student pro-formas completed during the interviews, and the parallel information gathered in the SIRP and general student questionnaires, we were able to provide a general profile of the country of origin of these students, the type of students (full-time, part-time, undergraduate, postgraduate) their gender, whether they came to Scotland alone and the type of accommodation they had. (see Appendix 8)

3: The institutional perspective

This chapter presents our findings from Stage 1 of the research. It looks first at the institutional response to the initial information request form (Appendix 1) followed by detailed analysis of institutional procedures and content analysis of documentation.

Institutional response

The following table shows the response from HE institutions and FE colleges to our initial request for sample documentation and information about their procedures for overseas students. This table includes all HE institutions and selected FE colleges and reveals a high response from HE and FE but a low return of documentation from Language Schools.

Table 3.1: Institutional response to information and documentation requests

	HE	FE	Language Schools SELTIC (those not included in selected HE institutions
No of institutions contacted	22	11	5
No of institutions who returned sample documentation	20	7	0
No of institutions who returned the information request form	19	7	4

In addition, in only a minority of the independent schools was separate literature provided for foreign pupils. (Information provided by the Scottish Council of Independent Schools.)

Institutional procedures

It became clear in the early stages of our investigations that there was some variation between institutions in terms of the structure and procedures for recruiting and receiving overseas students and the levels of information provided. The processes and procedures used by the educational institutions were assessed using the information request form (Appendix 1) sent to all of the institutions at the start of the project. The form requested information on staffing (International Officers, International Student Advisors), methods of information provision and the procedures in place to look after newly arriving international students.

Higher Education Institutions

The analysis of the institutional procedures and institutional documentation was carried out looking at both HE institutions and FE colleges (see Appendix 9). To reflect the different experiences and traditions of HEIs and the different markets which they serve, we categorised the HEIs into three groups. The first of these were the established universities made up of the eight oldest universities in Scotland, the latest of which was founded in 1967. The next group were the

former colleges and polytechnics which have become universities since 1992, plus one other HEI. The final group are monotechnics, or smaller specialised HEIs concentrating on particular core subjects. Where we wish to distinguish between these groups we refer to 'established universities', 'post 1992 HEIs' and 'monotechnics'. The generic term 'HEI' refers to all three.

International staff

The HEIs have well established systems and processes to deal with the recruitment, admission and support of international students. In many cases the key factor is the role of the international office, international officer or the designated member of staff with responsibility for international students.

Our analysis of the institutional responses shows that there is a distinct difference between the established and post 1992 institutions, and the monotechnics when it comes to the staffing provided to help international students. All of the established and post 1992 institutions have an international office and the majority have both an international officer and international student advisor within this office to aid international students. Only one of the monotechnics has an international office, with three of eight having an international officer and none having an international student advisor. Some of the questionnaire responses from monotechnics indicated that their small size made it possible to solve any problems an international student might have on a personal basis, thus there being no need for staff with a specific overseas advisory role.

The structure of international offices varies widely and there are also differences in the roles that they perform. Firstly, some of the international offices are solely concerned with the marketing of their institution and the recruitment of international students. Others, whilst co-ordinating the recruitment of new international students, are also involved in the ongoing support of these students. Secondly, some HEIs have international offices which are located within other departments such as student registry, admissions or student services. This may not affect overall levels of provision for overseas students but it may affect the emphasis placed on key issues or how priorities are identified.

Another area of difference between institutions is the structures in place to provide student support. Student support can be provided via a number of different channels. Separate international offices may have their own international student advisors who work out of the international office providing ongoing support or advice. The support may be provided by a separate student counselling service or through a student association which either employs counsellors or has volunteer student representatives. In some institutions both will be available. It is important to highlight these variations particularly when we come to look at the responses of students from interview (see Chapter 5) concerning their initial and ongoing contact with their international office.

International student associations

International student associations and clubs are an important focus for international students who seek support or social interaction. They are present in all of the established universities and post 1992 HEIs. Although international student representative positions also exist in all these HEIs only five out of seven, and two out of four respectively, are presently filled. In contrast only one of eight monotechnics has an international student association, and although half of the eight have a position for international student representative only two were filled at the time of asking. It was noted by an HEI staff member that international students are often unwilling to take on the position of international student representative as it can be seen as being political.

Information provision

Institutions provide a range of information to international students at pre-arrival and arrival, including the pre-application information sent out to prospective international students, specific pre-arrival information for students accepted at an institution and details of arrival and welcome procedures. There may also be other levels of information sent out by individual institutions which may provide further details or confirm previously supplied information in addition to correspondence or communications to individual students.

In addition, it should also be noted that information is available to potential students in their own countries through British Council information available at education fairs or at their Web site. This is often the first point of contact with the UK educational system prior to application to any individual institution whether or not that student goes on to be funded by the British Council.

Our analysis shows that the information provided by HEIs to international students was broadly similar in all the institutions. All of the established universities and post 1992 HEIs provide a range of information specific to international students in their prospectuses. Key information for international students is generally provided by the majority of institutions in a separate international student guide or handbook. In the monotechnic institutions more provide these forms of information than don't. Appendix 10 shows this in more detail. In some instances, institutions will provide information on video. Nearly all provide a range of information on Web sites.

While many institutions generate their own literature, some draw on information from other agencies such as UKCOSA and OSPREY, sometimes supplementing their own information with packs or leaflets from these organisations. Liaison with different administrative departments in institutions ensures regular updating of information contained in booklets and leaflets, a task which is necessary in an area where rules and regulations governing immigration, for example, are ever changing.

While most of the information provided by institutions to international students is distributed at pre-arrival, it is supplemented on arrival in some HEIs by a second international handbook providing information students are required to know once in Scotland. In other institutions it is all covered in pre-arrival literature. Institutions may provide a more interactive means of information provision by bringing together a range of welfare, advisory and other agencies such as police, health, Victoria League, OSPREY or equivalent into their 'welcome' programme, however that may be structured, to give international students access to the information they require rather than have it provided in a handbook form.

The analysis of levels of information provision show that timing of receipt of information is crucial. While it has proved difficult to establish any clear pattern across all HEIs, indications from student data are that the pre-arrival information sometimes arrives too late to allow them to complete other preliminaries or formalities in their home country like visa applications etc.

The analysis of the content of the information provided for international students is discussed later in this chapter.

Welcome and arrival

The methods by which the HEIs welcome new international students cover general 'meeting and greeting' as well as the institutional welcome by way of social, academic and cultural introductions to Scotland and Scottish education.

The initial welcome for international students, the 'meeting and greeting', is carried out at two levels. Firstly, there is the 'welcome' given on arrival in Scotland, and secondly, the welcome given by individual institutions.

In the larger cities a civic reception or welcome event is often held to welcome new students from overseas. Beyond this type of civic initiative, in Glasgow and Edinburgh, there is a city-based welcome programme organised by the respective HE and FE institutions. The co-ordination of welcome procedures provides a unified system whereby the 'meeting and greeting' is city-based rather than institutional. Thus, the welcome accorded to international arrivals may appear more effective in these cities than in other centres. Those students arriving at any of the other institutions outwith these centres must make use of the welcome and arrival arrangements made for them by their institution which may not be as extensive as those in the larger cities.

OSPREY International Students Advisory Council co-ordinate the arrival of students at Edinburgh airport, and usually have an information stand in the city centre, manned by volunteers during a two to three week period in September of each year. While the majority of students who are welcomed will be attending Edinburgh institutions, some students are assisted through the welcome process to other academic centres.

Glasgow has its own separate meeting facility in the form of the Glasgow International Welcome Programme, which runs for four weeks at the end of September and beginning of October. The programme has a meeting and information point for all students in George Square in the centre of Glasgow, and caters for all international students at the city's many educational institutions. While STRATOS (Strathclyde Region Advisors To Overseas Students) has a Planning Group which has a role in co-ordinating the programme and in producing the welcome pack, the Glasgow Churches Council for Overseas Students has appointed since 1950 an International Chaplain to co-ordinate the welcome programme. The International Chaplain goes on to work through the Chaplaincy teams in the individual institutions to look after the pastoral side of overseas student issues. When there has been no International Chaplain, then a temporary co-ordinator has been appointed to oversee the welcome programme.

The Glasgow Welcome Programme focuses on a drop-in centre manned by volunteers and has some unique features. The provision of yellow luggage labels and yellow document files enable new international students to be easily identified by their fellow international students (especially during travel to Scotland), by the general student community and by staff members with the aim of encouraging a more informal welcome. The 'identity tag' is similar to red luggage labels recently introduced by the British Council which allows students to recognise fellow international students. The length of this programme also means that there may be less 'welcoming' done on an individual institutional basis.

Analyses of the institutional responses show that all of the HEIs provide a formal welcome to international students apart from two of the monotechnics. Induction will take different forms ranging from weekend or week long sessions to short introductory sessions. The established universities all have social orientation programmes and all but two have cultural awareness programmes, but one of them indicated it did not have an academic induction for international students. The analysis of HEI documentation suggests that this is an area where established HEIs have procedures in place. The post 1992 HEIs also have extensive introductions for their international students with all providing a general welcome and academic induction, and all but one giving a social orientation programme. None of the post 1992 HEIs arrange a cultural awareness introduction, and this is also an area of weakness in the monotechnics with only two introducing new international students to Scottish culture. However, it may be that some of these issues will be included within general welcome or induction programmes and were not reported back in the institutional responses.

Finally, the level of information provision at academic department level has not been examined in this study. It should be noted that social and academic introductions are sometimes carried out on a departmental basis, particularly in the case of post-graduate students at some of the institutions.

Ongoing support

As indicated above, most institutions have staff in place to provide ongoing support to all students. Staff with a particular remit to look after international/overseas students or international student advisers are present in almost all HEIs. These staff members will often be involved in contributing to information provision pre-arrival as well as co-ordinating or being involved in welcome procedures. Their role can be an all encompassing one or it can be limited to welfare advice.

Students in some HEIs will therefore have access to several tiers of support. They can receive general advice or help from an international officer where that role is wider than recruitment and marketing, they can move on to receive more specialist or particular advice from general student support services however that might be set up, or they may have access to further advisory services within a Students' Association. In some institutions, an international student adviser may fulfil all these functions.

Our review of the institutional documentation has shown that support for overseas and international students is much wider than this. The following may be in place to offer the student more informal support:

- *buddy or 'parenting' schemes*

  International students have a buddy to shadow them, a friendly face who can offer one-to-one assistance. This most often would be another international student or a senior student.

- *host families*

  Some institutions co-ordinate host family schemes or facilitate publicity about groups like the Victoria League (Edinburgh based) which arrange local family contact and outings for overseas students. This is limited by funding and availability of host families. The national HOST scheme whereby students can meet families in the UK is dependent on institutional funding on a per capita basis thus making it limited.

- *chaplaincy centres*

  The role of university chaplain may be of particular significance for international students. Chaplaincy centres and international student Christian associations will provide a centre for meeting other students. The Edinburgh Christian Students International Committee (ECSIC) is an example of one such group offering help and friendship to overseas students and is open to students at all the universities and colleges in the city.

- *other tiers of support*

  Some institutions have other tiers of support through postgraduate student wives groups, or other networks offering families support. In addition there will be the usual range of social activities and clubs available to all students.

Further Education Colleges

The participation of the FE sector in the overseas market and in the recruitment of international students is on a much lower scale than HEIs. Therefore as one might expect the development of information provision, welcome procedures and ongoing support will be less extensive than in the HE sector.

Analysis of the responses from the selected FE colleges in this study (see Appendix 9) confirms that the infrastructure for arrival of new international students and for their ongoing support is generally more limited than at the HEIs. Less than half of the FECs have an international office or international officer, though six out of the seven who sent in a return do have a member of staff responsible for overseas students.

All of our FE sample have information pertaining to international students in their prospectus, and all have their own web-site. Although there is information for the international students in the prospectus of the selected FECs, only three have a separate international student handbook/guide.

New international students are well served by five out of the seven FECs, who provide general welcome, social orientation and academic induction, but again as in the HEIs there is less emphasis placed on cultural awareness with less than half of the FECs providing information to introduce the students to Scottish culture and to each others cultures. Of the FECs only two have an international student association and none have an international student representative, but with FECs having only so few overseas students, and with the majority of the overseas students at FE colleges on shorter FE courses this is not unexpected.

A large proportion of students at FE colleges will be EFL students studying full-time or even on a short part-time course. It should be noted that within these specialised schools there will be a much higher level of involvement by staff in providing a range of welcome procedures, cultural introductions and close contact with their students. Thus they often fulfil the role of student welfare adviser as well as tutor. It is also true to say that staff will be under more pressure to carry out these different roles because there may not be wider institutional back up or liaison in some institutions.

Document analysis

Criteria for analysis

A measure or benchmark was required against which the contents of the range of institutional documentation could be analysed. We looked at the CVCP's Code of Practice, *Recruitment and Support of International Students in UK Higher Education (1996)* and the British Council *Code of Practice For Educational Institutions and Overseas Students*.

Although both codes are equally valid, we decided upon the CVCP guidelines as this code had been drafted in consultation with both the British Council and the HEQC, and has been endorsed by COSHEP, the Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals. The code is also particularly comprehensive covering general information, academic information and ongoing student support.

The CVCP Code of Practice (1996) includes guidelines for institutions on the criteria which should be used in information provided to international students. These include headings on academic information and support services. These were viewed by the research team as appropriate criteria by which to assess the information which was actually provided by institutions to students. Some additional issues emerged from the interviews and we included the more important of these into our analytic framework.

The document analysis covered 20 of the 22 HE institutions approached, and 7 of the 11 FE colleges. Not all of the institutions contacted to request information and documentation responded, thus our actual numbers fall below our intended sample size.

The documents analysed included prospectuses, international handbooks, student guides and any other source of information provided for students. This also includes, for the institutions that use them, information sheets from outside sources of information such as the British Council, OSPREY International Student Advisory Council and UKCOSA.

Higher Education Institutions

In the documentation provided to students by the HE institutions in Scotland there are areas that concern not only international students, but also home students. These areas are well covered: for example, all twenty have information concerning courses offered and the qualifications required for acceptance on these courses, as well as the academic requirements, English language requirements and the application procedures involved. This information appears in the institution's prospectus, and as such goes to all students interested in attending that institution.

Some areas listed in the CVCP Code are neglected by almost all. The key examples of these being procedures to assist students in the event of international crisis, and re-orientation support for international students preparing to go home. In each of these cases only two of twenty institutions gave information on how to obtain assistance for these problems, which clearly only affect international students and not the general home student population.

First to be considered is a comparison between the different types of HE institution - established, post 1992 and monotechnics- and their performance in meeting the CVCP guidelines.

Established Universities

The older developed and more established universities in the Scottish HE system have an established infrastructure to deal with international students. As discussed above, all of these have international offices specifically for the use of international students, as well as international student handbooks and associations. This, along with established procedures for the arrival and induction of new international students, means a large amount of information going to the students before and after they have arrived at their place of study.

Indeed one of the international officers interviewed noted that there can be too much information going to the student with a lot of it being duplicated in information from different sources.

These older universities were evaluated in terms of the CVCP guidelines and they fulfilled, on average, 88% of the suggested areas of information provision. This figure being a lot higher than the others, shows the value of having an established system and staffing specifically for the international student population, particularly at the start of their course.

These universities are particularly strong in providing information about academic support. This information covers English language assessment, tuition and further support, but also study skills such as essay writing and research methods, assessment and examination methods and the study support available for any problems.

Due to the high level of information provided to international students at all of the older Scottish universities, there is a degree of homogeneity between them. Therefore, in order to fully review their provision of information it will be important to look at the style and tone of the presentation of the information (see below).

Post 1992 HEIs

The second group within the Scottish HE sector are the post 1992 universities and HEIs not included in the eight old established universities in Scotland. Although the percentage representation of international students at these institutions is very similar to the monotechnics (between 0.5% and 5.0%), the actual numbers are much higher, being between 50 and 450 international students.

The newer universities and colleges, on average, cover 76% of the recommended topics in the CVCP guidelines. However, this average disguises the fact that there is greater variability within this group of institutions, and that two of them have exceedingly good coverage of the guideline topics, while others have much patchier coverage. These two institutions have well-developed infrastructures and support mechanisms, would appear to meet most of the CVCP guidelines, and have links with other agencies (such as OSPREY and STRATOS).

One of the areas which does not receive a lot of coverage in some of the materials issued by these institutions is academic support. Although they are strong in recognising English language difficulties and providing tuition and support to meet them, wider forms of study support are less widely provided. There is little information available to international students on the processes of assessment and examination, while study skills, essay writing and research methods are little mentioned.

A tentative conclusion would be that those institutions in this group who have been actively promoting themselves in the international student market are indistinguishable, at least in terms of the information they provide and the infrastructure which they have in place, from the older established institutions.

Monotechnic HE Institutions

The monotechnic institutions comprise schools of art, music and drama, and agriculture, and tend to be among the smaller colleges in Scotland. The numbers of international students in 1996/97 was between 0.9% and 5.3% of the college totals (between 10 and 80 students), and while this compares with the percentage of international students at the other HE institutions it is a low number of students due to the size of these institutions. The size of the monotechnics means that there are fewer support staff for students, particularly for international students who are attending the course in very small numbers. In the initial information request form sent to all of the participating institutions, it was noted by the monotechnics that although they are small colleges, this can be an advantage, allowing them to deal with any problems that arise for any of their students on a personal basis. Thus there is less need for them to have the strong support infrastructure necessary in the large colleges or universities with a far greater number of students, and far more international students. This may explain the impression that the monotechnics fare less well on fulfilling the guidelines of the CVCP than the other Scottish HE institutions. On average they cover only 50% of the recommended areas of information provision, missing out on the areas already mentioned such as re-orientation support for international students going home and information on international crisis, but also falling down in areas such as police registration, arrival arrangements and religious and dietary requirements. The monotechnics also fare less well in the areas picked out from concerns raised by students in interview, e.g. although maps are provided there is no information given on the climate in Scotland, nor is there information on the facilities available for families to accompany international students while they study in Scotland.

Further Education Colleges

The FE institutional documentation was also tested against the CVCP guidelines, although these guidelines were not specifically designed for FECs. The documentation showed interesting comparison to the HE institutions, and like them FECs performed well in providing information on course requirements and application procedures with all prospectuses covering this. They also had good information provision for general areas such as accommodation, health and

recreational facilities. Other important pieces of information are supplied by almost all of the FECs that responded to our request for assistance, the most significant of these to international students being immigration and entry requirements, and cultural advice and costs for living in the UK.

Areas of information not so well covered include most crucially, employment rules for non-nationals, religious and dietary requirements, information on institutional assessment and reference to external sources of advice such as UKCOSA and the British Council. These are areas of information that would be useful to prospective international students.

It should also be noted that although the FECs on average fulfil 70% of the CVCP's guidelines, as in the post 1992 HEIs, this masks the fact that one of the FE colleges scored exceptionally highly covering 37 of the 41 recommendations, being closer to the provision of an HEI. This could be partially attributed to the high level of staffing and organisation prepared for incoming international students, and in turn to a strong English as a Foreign Language school.

Style and presentation of information

Early impressions of the institutional documentation which was returned suggested that there was considerable variation between institutions in terms of procedures and levels of information. As has been shown above, the emerging picture has been one of more homogeneity in terms of range of information provided with the significant variations occurring in the structures of international offices etc. In this section we explore how institutions present their information and make some qualitative comments about style and presentation.

Individual institutions in the HE sector and those selected in FE would no doubt all acknowledge that the general impression and style of their literature reflect attempts to provide the best information for students and would also see this as enhancing their position within the international recruitment market. The literature which has been collated from HEIs and the selected FE group reveal a very wide range of styles and forms of presentation. It is this aspect of information provision which results in the greatest variation across all institutions. This is where the main differentiation occurs but it is the area which is most difficult to measure in any objective way. As part of the document analysis outlined above, the information materials were examined for 'level of detail' (high, moderate, low), style and a qualitative/subjective assessment was made on overall appearance. The picture is a complex one with no one institution necessarily performing any better than another.

Information for international students is provided in prospectuses which may be general to all students or specific to international students. Detailed pre-arrival information is either provided in booklets or leaflets delivered to students in one or two stages prior to admission. Additional information which helps students to orientate themselves on arrival is most often provided in an international handbook

or in a folder with sets of leaflets and guides. These often include local information and maps of the town or city.

While it would be difficult to make more than tentative conclusions on effectiveness and performance of information provision to overseas students, some key general points can be made which may help institutions to evaluate and develop their information provision to overseas students:

- is the information provided in a way which is easily read and understood by students whose first language may not be English?
- is the information clear? Repetitive? Necessary?
- is the print too small?
- is there too much information at any one time?
- is the information presented in a style which is glossy? Is it illustrated with photographs and maps?

These comments will have increased relevance when read alongside the student responses in Chapter 5.

Web sites

International students with access to the Web can extract information about universities and colleges in Scotland by visiting institutional Web sites. In this section consideration will be given to the level of information available and its presentation.

Prospective applicants may find out information about Scottish education via the Web, if locations are known. Obviously, many will use search engines to access institutional locations providing the enquirer already has a clear idea of destination. In countries where the British Council is well known it may be that prospective applicants would first of all opt to use the British Council's site. Their 'virtual campus' pages provide a guide to different aspects of education in Britain such as welfare, campus information, etc. It has to be noted that this site does not provide links or access to all the Scottish institutions in higher and further education as it is an ECS subscriber service. Indeed, it only lists 12 Scottish universities, 2 colleges and one independent school. For the prospective student this may not therefore give them the full picture of Scottish education. However, all institutions in Scotland can be accessed through the links maintained on the British Council Scotland Website.

On its Web sites the British Council also provides an update for students in certain countries on the response of UK academic institutions to particular economic or financial crises in their home country, especially in South Asian countries at the present time.

Of all the HEIs and the 11 selected FE colleges examined in Stage One of this research, all but one FE college had web sites. Some are more developed than

others reflecting mostly the size of the institution (and resources available), the proportion of international students attending the institution and also the early development stage of some sites.

Ease of access is the key to successful retrieval of information from institutional Web sites. So from the perspective of the international student, what will be viewed as helpful? The researchers explored the Web sites with this question in mind. The following are some of the features which drew our attention:

- *Ease of access*

  When the word 'international' or 'international office' or 'overseas' appeared on the first page of the Web site (if that page was not a general welcome) then it was straightforward to move through different layers to locate information. If the word 'international' or similar key word was then on each information page then this proved helpful in negotiating backwards and forwards through each page of information. Some institutions provided an electronic copy of the International Student Handbook or Guide.

- *identifying a point of contact*

  Early mention of the name of the International Officer or similar individual as a point of contact provided a more personal approach. However, if only the point of contact is given and other layers of information for international applicants are absent then the onus is on the student to make further contact with the institution to obtain the necessary information.

- *words of welcome*

  These were striking when they were expressed in different languages and in some cases full translations of text were available.

- *visual presentation*

  Where there was geographical information, maps and visual representation of the institutions then it provided an additional impression of the institution.

- *access to other information*

  Some sites provide access to other levels of information by direct request on the site which may assist international applicants to receive information quickly.

- *competitive edge*

  Some institutions may provide a bulletin on freezing of current fees, 'special offers' on accommodation and bursaries or other awards available.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked in detail at the institutional policies, procedures and types of provision which exist in further and higher education to support students from overseas. We have seen that all of the longer established universities and most of the post-1992 HEIs have established international offices and have some form of support and welfare service for overseas students, though there are variations in the ways that these are manifested. Monotechnic institutions are less likely to have

a separate and identifiable infrastructure to support overseas students. They are, however, smaller institutions with fewer overseas students and this may facilitate a more direct and personal approach to supporting these students. The situation in further education is very similar.

The information provided by the institutions was evaluated against the CVCP guidelines and the same split was noticed. Most institutions who are major players in the overseas students market satisfied a high proportion of the CVCP guidelines. They also tended to have established induction programmes and welcoming activities. Organisations such as UKCOSA, OSPREY and STRATOS were also contributing to ensuring that overseas students were properly received and supported in this country.

Finally we took a brief look at the style and presentation of the information which institutions make available, including information available on the World Wide Web. While this involves inevitably subjective judgements, we have attempted to suggest some aspects of presentation which make the information more useful and user-friendly.

4: Issues and concerns: the staff perspective

Introduction

This chapter draws together material from staff discussions (fifteen staff across eight institutions) on the problems faced by overseas students and strategies for tackling such issues. It begins with a brief discussion of approaches to supporting overseas students, looks at issues concerned with cultural awareness and then goes on to look at identified problems and their resolution.

For many individual students problems can be temporary, for example, needing a short term loan until a cheque is cleared. However, many of the issues identified by staff are much more intractable. For example, not all institutions have family accommodation. In such instances, while staff may be well aware of the problem, to tackle it effectively would require substantial institutional resources. Students can experience problems at various stages during their academic careers. For some, problems begin with immigration prior to arrival, other problems manifest themselves on arrival or emerge as students' academic careers progress. In many instances staff displayed flexible ingenuity in 'solving' problems presented to them by students.

General comments on student support

Staff spoke of the various ways in which they worked with, and attempted to support overseas students. Whilst most of the institutions attempted to develop pro-active approaches to student support there was a general feeling that the number of students attending organised activities and events was often low. This led some staff to conclude that they were generally more successful when they worked reactively to students' self-presented problems. However, it was acknowledged that there was a greater danger of students 'falling through' the support net with reactive approaches since staff were less likely to become aware of students' problems at an early stage.

In one or two institutions staff indicated that they would have liked greater co-operation and contact between the various strands of welfare and recruitment services. Responsibilities can be sharply defined. Often, once students are recruited the international office will have little to do with them and the onus for support passes to student welfare services. However, in two institutions staff spoke of a deliberate policy of providing student welfare services through the students' association or students' union. The rationale being that students would be more likely to access services which were seen as less official. Indeed, one institution also regularly referred students to outside professional counselling services. This was felt appropriate since such outside agencies were more likely to be viewed by students as neutral and independent of the institution.

Awareness of cultural differences

During many of the interviews staff demonstrated sensitivity to the cultural adjustment which many overseas students experience on arrival. They suggested that such a change could contribute to the problems faced by students. There was some resistance to seeing particular problems being the preserve of particular nationalities or ethnic groups. Instead, staff sought to stress the importance of seeing each student as an individual, as likely to experience the same problems and difficulties as students from any other country or culture. Moreover, there was some suggestion that cultures seldom remain static, that they are constantly evolving and being redefined and as a result one has to respond appropriately to each situation.

> *If you go back about two years and you think of Malaysian student women who were very conservative. You know you would not have seen them with jeans on and participating in things which is entirely different now because the country itself has been developing and a lot more people have been exposed to external issues. It is not the same as it was a long time ago.*
>
> International officer

Such responses demonstrate a sophisticated and individualised approach to dealing with student issues that one driven by cultural stereotypes cannot encapsulate.

Several interviewees raised the issue of cultural awareness and the need for training among other institutional staff who were not specifically involved in supporting overseas students but who nevertheless were likely to encounter such students at some point. For many staff this was seen as a particular priority area. Several staff members had taken part in various in-house training sessions involving other staff. For example, one international officer recounted,

> *I'm involved in training of the student assistants in residences. I also do training for, and we meet together with, the welfare services in the union and student advisory counselling services, health service and whatever....it's a close liaison that we have.*

In another institution a student councillor remarked,

> *because cultural awareness is something that not everyone has at the top of their list.....I started a cultural awareness group and have been running it for two years...*

Problems arising from cultural differences

Many of the interviewees spoke about particular aspects of culture which could disadvantage overseas students studying here. One or two staff in different institutions remarked on the inherent conservatism of many overseas students. There was a belief that students were often uncritical in their approach to academic and welfare issues. As one international officer remarked,

> *International students are not especially good at making criticisms because they see it as unprofessional there is a certain level of vulnerability there if you start criticising things that might be happening within a department or within a system.*

Staff also felt that students were also less willing to seek help with a problem if such an enquiry could be construed as implicit criticism of services or departments.

Moreover, it was suggested that some nationalities were less likely to seek help since in their countries such actions could be interpreted as a loss of face.

> *If there is any problem.....they are encouraged to see me, despite that it's not in the culture of the Chinese and the Japanese, they sometimes see it as a personal failing if they have to go and see somebody.*
>
> International officer

In some cases such beliefs were compounded by cultural attitudes to gender. One female welfare adviser spoke of potential difficulties in dealing with African males who were less used to discussing problems with females.

One or two staff went on to speak of the role and dynamic of peer group pressure on students from the same country. There was some suggestion that issues of status among fellow nationals, deriving from previous social, cultural, and economic positions, could impinge on some students willingness to seek help.

Staff adopted a range of approaches in tackling issues arising from different cultural backgrounds. These were often based on informal befriending strategies which drew on the substantial experience of staff. These included:

- stressing the open door policy of welfare and advice services
- providing a welcoming greeting in all situations, and
- building up longer term relationships to secure the confidence of students.

In one example, an international officer suggested the importance of building up trust among students to help overcome cultural barriers. To do this he often used humour,

> *It's the human sort of side of things, if you can get people laughing at themselves in a strange country then you have won ... If students can really see it in that way, that it's not a threat, that it is not someone who is taking advantage of them because they have a different language or whatever.*

Many staff pointed out they were only in a position to help students who came forward and identified themselves. Recognising that many overseas students may be less willing to identify themselves to welfare and support staff highlights the need for effective 'early warning systems' to be in place at departmental level which can pick up student problems at an early enough stage and take this problem forward with the student to the appropriate support service.

Evaluation

In some institutions staff highlighted the impact of cultural conservatism on attempts to evaluate the services on offer to overseas students. With its inherent requirement for critical comment it was felt that overseas students were less likely to respond in a critical fashion if at all. In several instances attempts to evaluate 'welcome packs' had produced poor response rates. However, an exit questionnaire of students leaving one institution had produced a more substantial response rate. Staff in this institution indicated that early analysis was showing a range of responses including some which were highly critical. It was suggested that the relationship built up between the international office and the overseas

students over the preceding years had encouraged students to respond in greater numbers and in a more critical fashion.

Immigration

In one or two HE institutions the International Officers raised the issue of immigration difficulties experienced by students from certain countries. One suggested that students coming to the UK from, for example, China and Pakistan, could face obstacles in obtaining the necessary visa and documentation. In responding to this identified problem, this institution provided telephone tutoring for students prior to their attendance at the relevant government office.

Induction and pre session classes

Institutions often use the week preceding the first academic term for student induction and socialising activities. Some of these induction sessions are run specifically for overseas students. While the nature and content of such sessions can vary, several staff in different institutions raised similar concerns over the timing, duration and 'costs' of such activities.

A high proportion of overseas students register for post-graduate courses. Post graduates can begin their studies at almost anytime during the year. Many thus arrive outside the period of induction and are unable to attend. Moreover, staff were aware that among overseas undergraduates a proportion delayed their arrival on campus so as to reduce their accommodation and living costs. Effectively such delays meant missing the pre-term information sessions. Moreover there was a recognition among a small number of staff that a failure to establish contact with overseas students during this initial arrival period meant that they were even less likely to establish contact with students at a later date. Further there was a belief that students would not endeavour to join activities and clubs which were already up and running. The net result is that a number of overseas students arriving at many institutions 'fall through the net'. In one instance staff had tried to tackle this issue by running an induction weekend at the end of the first 'official' week of term by which time more overseas students had arrived. However, the problems associated with late arrival of postgraduate students still remained.

In addition to institution-based induction some departments and faculties organise their own induction sessions. These tend to be primarily aimed at postgraduate students joining the department. Generally these sessions involve introductions to departmental members and resources.

In several instances concerns were raised over the amount of activities and information on offer for students during induction periods.

> *There is so much for new students to take in, there is so much going on and if you are an overseas student you have the extra problem of slower processing because of language.* International officer

As a result of this recognition the international office staff in one institution limited their overseas student induction session to one half day during 'freshers week'.

Staff generally recognised the importance of conducting induction sessions close to the beginning of academic sessions so as to give students the information and support they required as soon as possible. However, among some staff this was tempered with an understanding of the difficulties associated with this strategy, namely, that some students would not be able to attend and that it was also a time of great demand on students time. Thus in a number of institutions staff were effectively trying to balance several factors in attempting to maximise student participation in induction activities.

Proficiency in language and study skills

In most institutions students are required to demonstrate a minimum level of language proficiency prior to entry. However, one or two staff members in higher education institutions suggested that students had gained entry despite having language difficulties. A few staff working in further education colleges also suggested that some students in non-language courses were struggling as a result of their language problems. It can be argued that it is unfair to both the students and their teachers to admit them to courses when they do not have the language proficiency to deal with the material.

Classes are commonly offered to address these problems, which extend beyond the linguistic and can include aspects of learning and teaching styles which may be very new to some students.

> *In relation to study skills some groups of students have particular difficulties with our university self study system. For example, Malaysians and Singaporeans are more used to traditional learning methods and can experience difficulties, so study skills sessions are conducted as well.*
>
> Student welfare officer

Relatedly, a few staff also mentioned particular difficulties that post graduate student could experience with their supervisors. It was suggested that they often had expectations of the supervisors role which was at odds with those of the supervisor.

It is important that students in need of such support can be identified at an early enough stage to benefit from the class. In one example staff spoke of the difficulty in convincing certain groups of students that they would benefit from attendance at English language classes. Traditionally students from this country had reasonable standards of spoken English, however, staff felt their levels of written English was not quite high enough for them to be able to cope effectively.

Isolation and awareness of services

Isolation among overseas students was seen by several staff as a major area of concern and many of the activities and events organised by institutions are geared to addressing this issue.

Isolation can be the result of a lack of knowledge of the services and activities that are available. One international office uses e-mail to keep students up to date with events and information while others rely on notice boards. However, staff

generally recognised that informing students of activities and events can prove to be difficult.

> *It's an ongoing problem of how to publicise what services are available... and it's worrying sometimes, you can get a 4th year coming here and saying 'I didn't know all these things were available'.* Student welfare adviser

Such a statement was recognised by the adviser as an indication of failure to successfully contact overseas students.

Staff in another institution suggested that overseas students were likely to feel homesick in their first few weeks. In some instances housing overseas students from the same country together was seen as one strand in addressing such isolation. However, several student interviewees suggested that such a strategy can subsequently isolate overseas students from sections of the wider student population.

Other staff stressed the need to establish early contact with overseas students to tackle potential isolation. Once contact had been established the staff member attempted to engage the students in clubs and activities which would widen their circle of friends. One strand of this involved encouraging students to go along to a drop-in café where they could meet other people. In many of the institutions organised events such as, coach trips, dances and cultural evenings were seen as important vehicles for promoting social contact among students. However, in some instances turn-out could be poor.

In one further education college the international officer pointed out that since students were arriving at different times for courses of different duration this meant that students generally had less time to establish sustained contact with each other. Moreover, in this institution it was recognised that the self contained and free-standing nature of the EFL building tended to lead to greater levels of isolation among this group of students that would normally be expected if the building was integrated in the main campus.

Finance

In three of the institutions staff highlighted difficulties associated with student finances. In some instances it was noted that students had arrived at their institution without sufficient liquid funds. In some cases this was felt by staff to be the result of a lack of, or clarity of information supplied to the student prior to enrolment. In other instances staff suggested that students, particularly post graduates, had established links with departments rather than the international office and subsequently lacked certain pieces of information.

In some instances financial difficulties are exacerbated for a time by students arriving with large amounts of their national currency in the form of bank drafts which, in some instances, have taken up to three months to clear.

> *In the early days ... students ... brought drafts in 'Ringgits' ... well it takes about three months to clear the damn thing.* International officer

In the case of short term financial difficulties staff indicated that students could be granted short term loans to bridge periods of financial shortage.

Accommodation for families

Where on-campus family accommodation is very limited or non-existent, which was the case in all of the institutions visited, staff indicated this to students and strongly advised them to come alone. However, in some cases students had arrived unexpectedly at the institution with other family members.

> *In some cases students do turn up out of the blue with their families in tow and this creates a problem. Fortunately this happens very infrequently.*
>
> International officer

In another institution an International Student Counsellor said that on one occasion thirty Malaysians announced their arrival over the telephone from the airport. For staff, this number of individuals, which included family groups, was completely unexpected. However, both transport and accommodation was secured for everyone within a few hours.

While a number of families may find accommodation within an institutions housing stock for an initial period, often the first year of studies, they may then find themselves having to secure accommodation for future years in the private sector. In some cases the location of the institution can lead to problems beyond merely securing other accommodation. Housing in the immediate locale of one of the study institutions was very expensive, too expensive for most students with families. As the international officer pointed out,

> *... one of the biggest problems being the dramatic change in cost....because the university owned accommodation is relatively inexpensive but ... the town is a very expensive.*

The solution for many students attending this institution was to seek accommodation in outlying areas and other towns. This often resulted in further isolating partners and family members.

Academic pressure

Generally staff recognised that overseas students tended to be highly motivated. Several staff recognised that overseas students can face additional stress through 'pressures' to succeed. Funding for many overseas students can come from several sources. For some students funding can be provided by a government or commercial organisation. In these instances sponsors can have fairly high standards to be met by students and in some situations demand regular progress reports to ensure continued funding. One international officer gave the following example,

> *students sponsored by the Malaysian ministry of education have pressures on them because of their sponsorship they are expected to deliver the goods and deliver a pretty high level of qualification at the end of it.*

In addition to those students concerned about the high expectations of sponsors, staff also spoke of the pressures on students who were either self financed or funded by other family members.

A large number of undergraduate Korean students are self funding and most of them are working. The bulk of funding comes from their saving but may also draw on their parents savings who may not be well off....they are also renowned for working 23 hours out of 24. International officer

Peer support schemes

In two institutions a 'buddy' system for overseas students was in operation and in two others plans were afoot for such a scheme. Peer support generally involves senior students adopting 'new' students and providing them with ongoing support and information in an informal fashion. The plan for a 'buddy' scheme in one of the institutions had arisen as a result of positive feedback from Scottish students who had been on placement in a Scandinavian university and had experience of such a system. In the other planned 'buddy' scheme the institution intended using 'buddies' drawn from indigenous Scottish students. In addition Scottish students families would be asked to support a hosting scheme.

Conclusion

- The staff viewpoint and approach tended to be supportive, responsive and flexible.
- Self-evaluation by institutions has proved to be difficult due to poor response rates from overseas students, which may perhaps be due to the reluctance of some of them to speak out.
- The critical points of induction of new overseas students relate to the timing, duration and costs incurred in attending these activities.
- Staff recognise the problems facing overseas students (such as language difficulties) and place importance on the early identification of their particular
- problems.
- A problem that needs to be constantly addressed is that of the possibility of isolation for overseas students. This can arise from a number of separate issues:
  - Cultural differences such as inherent conservatism, perceived loss of face arising from need for help or differing cultural attitudes, such as those towards gender;
  - Financial problems concerning living costs or funding;
  - Lack of family accommodation.
- These problems are addressed by staff in a number of ways including peer support schemes, open door policies at international offices and ensuring that the problems associated with induction are adequately dealt with. Some International officers suggested that there was a need for training in cultural awareness among institutional staff.

The overseas student support staff who we interviewed were clearly well informed of the issues and problems facing overseas students. They had systems and procedures in place to provide information and support to meet the academic, social and cultural needs of the visiting students. Where all goes according to plan, there

would be few problems. We have tended to concentrate on the more unusual and awkward issues which can confront them because we were interested in the boundaries of the service they provide, where things can start to break down. It is obvious that no system can hope to plan for all eventualities and cater equally for all circumstances. However, these staff appear to us to take a flexible, well-informed and pragmatic approach to the problems which can arise with overseas students. It now remains to see whether the students thought that they were successful in their attempts to do this. That will be the subject of the next chapter.

5: The students' views

The findings presented in this chapter are drawn from the student interviews and questionnaires. Interviews were conducted in both group and individual situations with 98 students. Further information was gathered from 75 students who completed questionnaires. In addition information from three short individual discussions with SIRP students and from two discussion groups with post graduate students' partners (female) have been included where appropriate.

The details of what the students had to say to us will form the substance of this chapter, but it is as well to state at the outset that their overwhelming response was that they were enjoying their experiences in Scotland and would recommend it to their peers. Academically their expectations were being met. Socially and culturally they were appreciative of much that Scotland had to offer (though in some cases it required some adjustment for them to adapt to it). Indeed, as we shall see, one common view was that some of them felt that they were not being exposed to enough of the 'Scottish experience'. We begin by stressing this generally positive finding because for much of the rest of the chapter we will be picking out their negative comments. We do this for two reasons: the first is that there is always room to improve and it is only by identifying the areas where improvement would be welcomed that we can further enhance the experiences of these students. The second reason is connected to the first in that we deliberately set out to get the students to identify those areas where they felt that their experiences could be improved. There was therefore an inbuilt bias towards the negative in the research (for the reason explained).

One further aspect of the students' comments should be mentioned. Not all of the things which they found irksome or troublesome are in the control of the educational institutions at which they were studying. Complaints about the Scottish weather are an obvious example. There were also aspects of British officialdom (anguished incomprehension and anger about Council tax, apparent inconsistency of immigration rules) and culture (especially food) which raised some comment. The best that any educational establishment can do about some of these things is to ensure that their potential students are well informed in advance about what they will have to deal with. The evidence here suggests that most are doing their very best to do so.

The interview schedule and questionnaire

Interviews were conducted using a schedule (see Appendix 5) which sought information on the following areas.

- Pre-arrival
- Arrival
- Living and studying in Scotland
- Recommending Scotland

The schedule was designed to allow students the maximum opportunity for reflecting on their experiences of studying in Scottish Further/Higher Education. Interviewees were asked about their decisions to study in Scotland, the factors which influenced their decisions to come to Scotland, the information available to them, their experiences of arrival in the country and reception at their chosen institution. Further questions asked about induction, support available to them, and their use of institution-based and wider community services. Particular focus was given to evaluating their experiences, areas of difficulty, and identifying areas where the services were most competent and where they could be improved.

A short questionnaire was completed by an additional 75 students. This questionnaire asked a small number of very open-ended questions about the extent to which the students felt that their needs had been met; what they had found to be most helpful (and what was not helpful); and what they thought that institutions could do to improve their service to overseas students. The questionnaire was devised and sent to students at a time when it looked as if the difficulties in obtaining interviews with students were going to cause a problem to the research. In the event this proved to be less of a worry than we had feared. The questionnaires were necessarily less detailed than the interviews could be and could not probe all aspects of the students' experiences. Nevertheless they do provide an interesting additional source of information which reflects those aspects of their experiences which the students chose to pick out as worthy of comment.

In what follows it should be assumed that all comments are from the interviews (which we regard as our major source of information on the students' views) unless they are specifically identified as being from questionnaire responses.

Analysis of the interview and questionnaire material has been undertaken using NUD*IST qualitative analysis software. This software is particularly useful in manipulating large amounts of interview and textual data. Given that many of the interviews were carried out with small groups of students rather than individuals it is not possible to quantify responses absolutely. Rather the approach has been to identify the most common responses and themes emerging and present them here in a more discursive fashion with, where possible, an indication of the frequency and weight afforded to the issue by the interviewees. The questionnaires were completed individually by the students and it has been possible to provide some element of quantification to these responses (although not all students chose to comment on all aspects of their experience.

Pre-arrival

Students were asked about their reasons for choosing to study in Scotland and at their particular institution. In particular they were asked about the sources of information which helped them decide to come to Scotland and to comment on the usefulness of such.

45

Why did the students choose to study in Scotland?

Most commonly students said that they had chosen either Scotland or the institution they were studying at on the direct recommendation of friends and/or other students who were studying in this country. This seemed to be a common major factor for many of these students. Of lesser importance, although mentioned in a number of interviews, was the availability of information about the country or institution. There was some indication that a small number of the students had taken the decision to come to Scotland on the basis of having attended a higher education fair in their own country or through accessing information on the Internet.

For some students the educational reputations of particular institutions was of prime importance. In a few cases students specified the esteem of possessing a particular qualification as justification for choosing to study in a particular institution. In a number of cases students were attracted by specific specialisms and courses on offer.

For a few students there was less of an element of choice in their decision. Some came to Scotland because of traditional links with their country, organisation or school, and some because of government-funded schemes

There is always an interest in Scottish things in Uganda. Ugandan male

We didn't choose to come here, our Government sent us here. Malaysian females

In a number of cases the decision to enrol in a Scottish Institution was the result of a partner's employment bringing them to this country. Most of these students were in further education English language classes.

For a small number of students the costs of studying and living in Scotland were of prime importance. Several students spoke of the lower cost of living in Scottish towns and cities or lower study fees compared with studying in England.

A small number of students also mentioned having relatives and family in the country as an important reason for choosing to study in Scotland. Of lesser significance a few students also mentioned, the availability of sponsorship, the beauty of the country, or a cultural/historical interest in the country. In a further one or two instances students spoke of seeing films and documentaries about Scotland which had informed their choice.

Information sources

Students drew on a number of sources in deciding to come to Scotland and selecting the institution to study at. In many interviews students also made comments about information that they received after they applied to study in particular institutions.

Having friends who were either studying in Scotland or who had past experience of Scotland was viewed as a valuable source of information by a large number of students. Students were apt to draw on such sources at various stages, from making the decision to come to Scotland to providing ongoing information and support once they had arrived. It is not possible to quantify the number of references to personal recommendations from friends, relatives or teachers which influenced these students, but it is the clear impression of the researchers that this type of information carried very much more weight with these students than all others. It was also frequently mentioned by them.

Smaller numbers of students also made reference to the use of other sources of information including, British Council publications, the Internet, teachers in their home countries, home government education services, international student guides, and higher education fairs. In a small number of cases students said that they had previously visited the country on holiday or to attend a conference and this had provided them with another source of information. In one or two instances students mentioned having already established personal academic links with individual institutions.

Once they had applied to and/or had been accepted to study at a particular institution a majority of students indicated that they received information on a range of topics from the institution. Many of these students said they remembered receiving a lot of information but could no longer recall its content. Where students did recall the nature of the information received they mentioned student handbooks, prospectuses and book/class lists. In addition some also mentioned more specific information on for example, travel, accommodation, living costs, and cultural and social events. Only one student mentioned having seen a specific institutional or general marketing video.

Significantly a number of students said that overall they had received little or no information prior to arrival in Scotland. In the case of the few students who received no information, in some instances this was the result of late enrolment but for others the situation remained a mystery.

Evaluating the information

Generally students were positive about the information they received prior to arrival, in fact many saw the pre-enrolment packages that they received as more helpful than induction programmes once they arrived at particular institutions. Given that some of the students arrived too late to take part in initial induction sessions this is not surprising. However, it highlights the prime role that induction packs may play for many overseas students.

Many students were particularly positive concerning specific information on for example, travel, accommodation, living expenses and immigration. Such information was generally felt to aid the overall settling in of the student.

> *A lot of information came after I accepted the offer to come here. Within a week of accepting the offer I got information from the residences and other services. After a few weeks I got more. The information kept coming and this helped to keep me focused on coming to* the [the institution]. *Most of the information was about* [the institution] *but there was also some on [the city] and also some concerning budgets which was particularly useful.* African male

Suggestions for improving the information sent to students prior to arrival did not focus on academic services or courses. While one or two suggestions were made for receiving information packs earlier in the year, students most commonly identified a need for further information on more general services and facilities including, general institutional information, local campus facilities and services, information about the locality of the institution and its proximity to other services such as shops and clubs. In addition several references to the need for maps were made.

Of the students who completed questionnaires, 27 made positive comments about the nature and quality of the information which they had received and 24 made comments which had a negative element. The positive comments tended to be general statements of approbation ("The welcome packs were the most helpful items we received.") with a tendency to praise information packs which included practical facts and information such as relevant telephone numbers, addresses, registration information and contacts. The negative comments were much more varied and detailed, to the extent that it was difficult to discern any pattern to them. Some were very specific to individuals, others had slightly wider application: requests for more information for those with families, or for those who arrived at times other than the start of the academic year. A number of these negative comments simply recorded the fact that they had not received information packs or that they would have liked "more detail".

Arrival

Information was sought on students experiences of arrival in Scotland and their initial period at their chosen institution. In particular questions focused on welcoming procedures, accommodation, induction sessions and the evaluation of such provision.

Students generally arrived in Scotland with some information about what to do and where to go. Some of the students had received specific instructions from their institution telling them how to get to their institution or accommodation, which transport to take and what they could expect to pay. Some students encountered 'welcome students' at the airport although many of the postgraduates, who may arrive at anytime during the year, reported not meeting an 'official welcome'.

Induction sessions

Institutions generally run induction sessions for overseas students during freshers' week or, in some instances, prior to freshers week. In some institutions induction sessions for overseas students can run over several days while in other establishments they may take place on one day only. The content of such sessions

also varies. In some cases students receive information concerning campus facilities only, while in others the range of sessions is more comprehensive covering, for example, registering with the police, health services, availability of support services, English language classes, cultural activities and contact persons. In some institutions external services such as the police and OSPREY make direct inputs to such sessions. In some instances departments or faculties within institutions also organise induction sessions. These are more likely to be aimed at postgraduate students. In the main such sessions focus on departmental facilities and activities and are generally not geared towards any specific needs of overseas students. However, one or two post graduate students reported staff members assuming orientation roles for them.

A number of students who had experienced institution-based and/or departmental-based induction were interviewed. Almost all students who took part in induction sessions, whether departmental based or institution wide, were positive about the experience. The following quotes are fairly typical,

I went to freshers week and found the sessions very useful. The students who operated the information desk were very friendly and I got all of the information that I needed about people and facilities. Mexican female

The talks and information were good and we had continued and regular contact via e-mail. Malaysian male

Health service and police at the registration, it makes it much easier for us. Palestinian male

In only one instance was a student critical of the induction sessions saying that it spent to much time repeating pre-arrival information.

It is worth noting the number of students who had not taken part in induction sessions, and the reasons for this. For postgraduate students who arrive at different times during the year this can easily arise since the induction sessions generally take place during week one of the academic year. In the case of undergraduate students who are starting their classes at the beginning of the academic session attendance should be more likely. However, some of these students reported non-attendance at induction sessions. Generally this was the result of financial considerations. To attend induction sessions in freshers week required an extra week's accommodation and living expenses which some students were unwilling or unable to pay.

Induction courses or Freshers' Week events were specifically mentioned by fifteen of the students who completed questionnaires. Eleven of these comments were positive and welcoming. Four were negative and ranged from the dismissive ("I did not bother attending") to the practical (wrong timing because of other commitments).

Most helpful?

Students were asked, on balance, what information and or source of information had proved most useful. From pre-arrival information through to everyday support

overseas students identified the networking amongst fellow students and friends as most important. One student who had arrived too late for the induction sessions told of her flatmates organising campus tours to provide her with the necessary information. We should perhaps not be surprised that this 'unofficial' support network should rank as the most important and useful aid to the students. The experience of further and higher education is, after all, a whole social experience which is about more than simply what the institutions provide. In this overseas students are no different to their UK counterparts.

As already indicated the pre-enrolment packages were the most commonly mentioned 'official' sources of helpful information closely followed by institution and departmental induction sessions. Some students identified elements of the pre-enrolment packages or induction sessions as most useful. These included information which specifically focused on living costs. In addition a few students mentioned the guided tours of the city and campus which the institution had organised.

Students also identified areas for improvement in induction sessions. Most commonly students sought further information on local off-campus facilities and services, more general information prior to arrival and more information regarding the institution itself.

Living and studying in Scotland

Living in Scotland

Students were asked about their experiences of a range of issues concerning living in Scotland including, accommodation, food, and cultural activities.

Accommodation

Overseas students can find themselves housed on or off campus in university or private accommodation. In several of the study institutions the lack of accommodation on the campus meant that students either had to find private accommodation off-campus or were restricted to spending only a portion of their time at university in on-campus university accommodation. Typically students would spend 1st year on-campus and 2nd/3rd off-campus in private accommodation, in some cases returning to on-campus accommodation in their 4th year. Students comments regarding accommodation were campus specific.

Generally being on-campus was viewed positively. For some students they had little travel time to worry about and they saved on travel costs.

> *I was on campus in my first year, and I can't wait to get back there. The hall of residence was new and was great. Living in a flat is OK ... but there are additional travel costs.* African male

Generally students sought mixed campus accommodation. For some overseas students one of the reasons for coming to Scotland was to improve their English and meet other nationalities, Scots in particular. However, in several situations students spoke of institutional policies which placed all the international students in

particular accommodation and groups of the same nationality in the same flats. This was felt to contribute to their isolation from the Scottish community.

Several students mentioned that the noise created by other students was one of the down sides to living in campus accommodation. This type of problem can be exacerbated by the building design and state of repair. Responses from students indicated that they experienced a range of quality in their accommodation. Such variation was as likely among students staying on campus as those staying off. For some their accommodation was more than acceptable,

> *Accommodation was better than expected. I had been advised that accommodation might not be very good. Rooms are quite big with private bathrooms.* Mexican female

> *I am in halls of residence and I absolutely love it. I have my own bathroom, its clean and quiet.* Caribbean female

While for others it was less acceptable,

> *Its small, noisy and dirty. Its basically falling apart.... Last fall we were so cold we put on the oven and opened the door.* Female group

> *The hall could do with a bit of repairs.....some of the rooms, the carpets are not in order and they're very old and dated.* Mixed student group

Some students found themselves in new campus accommodation which offered computer and telephone lines in addition to the more common facilities. However, in one instance students indicated that, counter to the advertised facilities, they found themselves in accommodation either without telephone and computer links lines or having to pay additional costs for them.

While some institutions have a general lack of accommodation for students the situation is more acute for students with families. In some institutions there is no accommodation provided for overseas students with families while in others a very limited number of housing units are available. One student highlighted this situation adding that the accommodation difficulty was compounded by a lack of help in finding suitable accommodation.

A small number of students suggested that the cost of their accommodation was generally too high. In one instance a student pointed out that the contractual accommodation system operating in her institution meant that while she was likely to finish her postgraduate qualification early she was still liable to pay the full year of her accommodation.

Only a small portion of students who completed the questionnaire chose to make any comment about accommodation. This suggests that it was not a major issue to most of these students. Three of the comments were positive appreciations of the help which the students had received from their institutions, and five were negative comments on particular difficulties which they had faced. These included finding accommodation for their family who had come with them, having to move halls of residence in vacations and, in one case, arriving to find that no accommodation had been pre-booked.

The cost of living in Scotland

This research took place at a time of financial uncertainty for many far eastern countries which have been particular target areas for recruitment by many of the Scottish institutions. Several of the far eastern students interviewed had experienced difficulty with the loss of purchasing power of their native currencies. In some instances institutions had reacted positively to this situation by providing additional financial support and/or pegging the exchange rate. While this is likely to be a short term acute problem for such students it was also noted that the majority of students interviewed indicated that they found living in Scotland expensive.

> *Compared with back home everything is expensive...oh it's very, very expensive, it's almost double. The clothes, I mean especially the food as well, if you compare between home it's almost double.* Mixed student group

For some students coming from warmer climes there can be additional costs in having to purchase warmer clothing. In a few cases students indicated that they were aware that they would have to purchase such clothing, however, in one or two cases they felt that they should have been warned about how much extra they would have to pay for such clothing if purchased in Britain rather than in their home country. Some additional costs were not expected. In one example a student discovered on arrival that bed linen was not supplied by the residence and he had to purchase a duvet and sheets which,

> *...cost about £100 pounds, having just paid £200 deposit on my room.* Male EU student

A few students clearly felt that the information they had received on living costs were less than realistic.

> *We were told that you could get by on £4000 for the year, but were given no indication about what £1 will buy, how much food and drink costs.* Mixed student group

However, other students felt that the budgetary estimates they had received prior to enrolment were both accurate and helpful.

Food

A number of students made specific comments concerning food. In almost all cases comments were negative, highlighting the expense of food, the poor quality on offer and the lack of choice. Several students specifically indicated that they felt poor food and eating facilities were compounded by inadequate campus facilities. For example,

> *We expected better food - there are no facilities for eating in the universities, not even a coffee bar, the cafes round the university had nothing but tasteless chips.* Mixed male female group

> *Shopping on the campus is very limited. I was not used to the food here and found myself having to go off campus to a supermarket where I have to spend more.* African male

> *Refectory food is poor.* Barbadian female

A few students who highlighted poor campus facilities suggested that students should be made more aware of the shortcomings of such campus facilities prior to

arrival. For those students on a campus university who have to shop off campus the extra travelling expenses may prove a significant extra cost.

Cultural and social activities

Institutions provide a range of cultural and social activities for students. In some cases particular events and activities are organised for overseas students. Many of the students were aware of activities organised by a variety of groups and individuals within the university. These included international students groups and coach trips run by the international office. Others were aware of opportunities on offer to them through organisations such as the Victoria League, which specialises in providing students with opportunities to meet local families.

In the main students were aware of a range of cultural and social opportunities available to them through university services, relevant organisations and or local facilities. A number of students interviewed said that they had not taken part in any or very few of these activities. While in one or two cases this was the result of a lack of information about activities, students were often at great pains to point out that the expense of their studies, the often compressed timetable of many courses, and the pressure from sponsors to succeed meant that they did not take part in activities which would eat into study time. However, several students who did take up such opportunities had found the experience rewarding.

I wrote to the Victoria League and they brought me together with a family that's down the hill. I think that over the years the family has been very good. They invite me over to their place for dinners and take me round and they've shown me quite a lot round here, and the league organised these things called Ceilidhs, ...dance around and enjoy ourselves and I think that was also very good. African male

I am enjoying my studies here, it is a good department and there are plenty of activities including going to the pub. The post -graduate office is very active, so there are lots of excursions. Malawi male

One or two younger students identified a lack of suitable institutional clubs and soc[illegible]es at their institution while a few attending a campus university suggested that a lack of transport meant they were less able to travel beyond the campus.

Local communities

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, several students spoke of their desire for more contact with both Scottish students and more widely with local Scottish communities. However, a number of students pointed out that most of their friendships were with other international students. Being accommodated with other international students, rather than home students, decreased the likelihood of forming friendships with Scottish students.

I've had a few Scottish friends but not as many as I would have hoped for. African male

It is more difficult to get friends with local people ... it is easier to be friends with foreign students mainly because of similar problems. Mixed student group

Whilst a number of students felt more isolated from Scots than they would have liked the general impression of Scottish people was positive.

Scottish people in general are friendly. I think that's something that attracts people. Mixed student group

It's different in London, the people, I find them very cold there, I prefer the people here ... Mixed student group

This whole question of cultural contact with Scotland and the Scots figured surprisingly commonly in the responses of the students who completed questionnaires. Twenty-four of the respondents mentioned it unprompted. Fourteen of these comments were entirely positive about their experiences. The ten comments which we classed as 'negative' were almost entirely complaints about not having enough opportunity to mix with Scottish people, find out about Scotland, and engage in Scottish cultural activities. Clearly some of these students are inherently curious about Scotland and the Scots and are not always having their curiosity satisfied.

However, while many student were praising the friendliness and openness of Scots one or two interviewees voiced concerns over racist encounters or racial stereotyping. For example,

When I was in [the city] *I used to have it almost every day really, almost every day, racist comments.* Omani male

Studying in Scotland

Students discussed a range of issues concerning their educational experiences. These included funding, educational resources and teaching, and educational and welfare support.

Funding and educational resources

For many overseas students funding is a major concern. Some self finance, others secure funding from their family, while many secure sponsorship from a company or government agency. From discussions with students it was apparent that the latter situation can place increased pressures on students since continued sponsorship is often dependent on regular positive reports from the institution.

Whatever their situation it was apparent that overseas students were acutely aware of the financial cost of their education and had become discerning customers. Many spoke of paying many thousands of pounds and qualified this with some notions of value for money. A number of students felt that in view of what they or their sponsor were paying that the facilities and resources available in the institution should be of an appropriate standard. For example,

We have got to pay in the order of £8000 a year and I tend to compare this with the universities in the States and I think that if the Scottish Universities or the UK universities as a whole want to remain competitive and get more international students into them mix they must look into improving their facilities because it is really, really quite disappointing. Male student group

... you have to look outside and see what the universities have to offer. I seem to feel that people are going to realise that universities in the States offer much more value for their money and people will tend to go there rather than coming to the UK. Male student group

Other students were more specific in their complaints. In one institution students spoke of poor library facilities for their course, with few recent references,

it is a museum not a library....some of us have resorted to buying books.
Male Malaysian student

Other students in this same institution also mentioned difficulties with the library, specifically in securing books. Several had overcome the problem by travelling to other local university libraries or by using a large municipal facility. However, it was apparent that they found the situation unacceptable, serving only to heighten their feeling of dissatisfaction with what was on offer in their institution's library.

I used the library of another institution and on two shelves I had everything, the very latest books which I really needed. In finance and accounting .....everything moves too fast, and like I said in our library you find books from the 1970s which are too old.
Albanian male student

In other situations student spoke of having to pay library fines (felt to be the result of a system with too few books to go round) and being charged to use photocopiers. In addition one or two students spoke of poor computer facilities in the computer labs. Generally there was a feeling among students that as full fee paying customers facilities could be better or that 'additional' costs should be covered by their fees. Whether this should be the case or not it was clear that many students were unaware of the standard of facilities on offer and/or had not been made aware of 'additional costs' prior to arrival at their institution. This included payment of a fee to register with the police under UK immigration laws.

The educational experience

Whilst there were some criticisms of the standard of resources, overseas students were generally positive about the standard of teaching, the quality of support staff and the system of education that they experienced. In particular many overseas students appreciate the perceived equality in many student staff relationships. The following comments were fairly typical:

This system is enriching. By the time you finish work, you know you know it. ...When you go to the library.....someone comes and serves you with a smile.... you feel they really want to help you. You go to the IT centre, there is a gentleman there.... I don't know how God created him.... he never gets tired, each time you have a problem you call him, he comes and he's smiling. And here our head of department is a PhD guy and we call him by his first name.....Maybe that's why the educational system in Scotland is known for its academic excellence and when you study you get a broader chance, more opportunities to enlighten your mind.
Female Ugandan student

I'm quite happy about our teachers because they have an open door policy.
Mixed student group

... you can come and talk to them if you have any problems ... see your tutor talk about the assignments you get back. I think that's a really good thing.
Female Norwegian student

They (staff) are very willing to help. Every time we're finished working on an essay or anything to do with our course we just talk to them and they take a good look at it, and they just treat us like...it's not like a basic teacher/student relationship, it's sort of like friends and they just talk to us about our problems and about what we can do to improve our essays and to be honest they're very, very helpful in that.
Mixed student group

These sentiments seemed quite widespread amongst both undergraduate and postgraduate students, and amongst students from most parts of the world. Nevertheless they were not universal. There was one questionnaire response, from a mature north American postgraduate, which painted a different picture:

> *Many of us foreign student feel that there is a 'take the money and run' attitude to us in British universities. Universities are only too happy to take our money, but reluctant to provide services in return. They don't seem very welcoming or encouraging either, on a personal level. Those of us from 'the colonies' are used to a more egalitarian academic culture, where research students are considered to be on the same level as junior academic staff, and are treated as if they are professional colleagues. I found the condescending attitudes of both academic and administrative staff rather hard to accept as a result. Perhaps [this university], and my department, are worse than other institutions and departments in the UK, but I don't think so.*

We do not know if this is an isolated case (it is certainly the only one in our data), a difference of cultural expectations, or a harbinger of things to come as the 'customers' become more aware of what they can expect for their money.

In some institutions classes are offered to overseas students to help improve their English. In some instances classes are also offered to students including those from overseas which are aimed at improving study skills or academic writing. In the main interviewees had not taken up the option of extra curricular English classes. In one or two locations students said that they would have to pay for such classes and that they were expensive.

> *They are expensive and you have to pay per week.* African male

In one instance a PhD student said that her department had been willing to cover the cost of English language classes had she desired to attend. However, it is clearly the case that the interviewed students were generally unwilling to attend classes which required additional payment.

Several students indicated that they had taken part in study skills courses and had found them helpful.

> *It was suggested that I attend a study skills course which was very good and free. It covered areas like managing research and interacting with your supervisor, writing reports and technical writing tips.* Mexican female

For some students such classes were also important in 'clueing them in' to differences between their native and the Scottish educational systems. However, it was apparent that a degree of confusion or misunderstanding concerning the objectives of classes and courses existed in a few of the students interviewed. For some their original expectations of what the course was about, its content and methods, were not met. For example,

> *The international perspective bit of the course was only for a few weeks and it was mainly theoretical, there were no seminars, discussion and placements.*
> Mixed student group

From the available interview material it is difficult to draw firm conclusions, however, it may at least highlight a need for systematic and explicit information concerning class aims, content, and methods to be more widely available to all

potential students and especially to overseas students making the commitment to an institution many thousands of miles away from home at great expense.

Student advisers and welfare

Educational institutions generally have employees who are responsible for student welfare. In some instances this function is the joint or sole responsibility with the students union or association. Faculties and departments may have designated members whose remit includes student progress. Not all institutions have personnel with responsibility solely for overseas students: it is common for welfare officers to include overseas students as part of a wider remit which covers the whole student population.

Many of the interviewees made comments regarding both academic and welfare advisers. Students often found it difficult to disaggregate welfare advisers and educational advisers. To some extent such a difficulty can be understood since there is often a link between educational progress and wider welfare issues. Indeed for many advisers it may not always be clear where the boundaries of their job lie.

On balance overseas students were more positive than negative about welfare and educational support received. Indeed, as discussed earlier in this chapter, students often spoke of a general ethos of support in their institution and a willingness to help.

> *Its not always been easy. I have dyslexia and I have to see academic counsellors....they are invaluable to me.* Canadian male

> *The international office is very helpful. I mean they ask you to see them anytime you have a problem and if you go there your question is answered. For me they were the first ones who took me around the college, showed me where my department is and from there the department took over. So the office was very helpful.* Mixed student group

Whilst many of the students had little contact with support services, usually because they had never required assistance, several had accessed the services.

> *Yes I've used the welfare officer ... very helpful, very positive.* Mixed student group

> *I received a loan to get back home for family business.* Albanian student

> *The international office was very helpful. There was a delay in my funding from Malawi, and the office assisted me with a £200 loan.* Malawi male

In most cases these students acknowledged a willingness to help among the welfare staff. However, in one or two cases students reported that they were less satisfied with the outcome. These generally involved problems with immigration and/or course funding. Staff have acknowledged that they are less able to deal with problems concerning both these issues and often refer students to other services such as OSPREY in the case of immigration difficulties. However, the one or two students who raised these problems did not appear to be aware of this remit limitation and felt that the individual officers had been unhelpful. Again there may be a case for formalising or systematising information on the role of institution-based welfare services and those services available through external and national

bodies. There were very few cases where students said that they were unaware of welfare services designed to provide support for them.

Thirty two of the questionnaire respondents made positive comments about the ways in which support and advice supplied by their institutions had met their needs. There were also 16 who made negative comments, mostly about not being able to obtain particular information, having missed particular information (for example through not attending induction sessions) or finding that some information was incomplete.

Particular difficulties

Students were specifically asked whether they had experienced any particular difficulties during their stay in Scotland or with their studies. The most common response concerned bureaucratic difficulties, difficulties with immigration, employment, and institutional rules and regulations.

> *In Heathrow some of us were pulled out of the group for a health check-up. We were examined physically and had to answer questions. We were told that if we refused the health check-up we wouldn't get our visa.* Malaysian females

> *The janitors make too many restrictions and generally they don't respect us like the mature students we are.* Mixed student group

> *I can't get a work permit. This makes things even more expensive.* Mixed student group

For a number of students isolation can be a problem. Some students said that they had difficulties meeting friends while others highlighted the difficulties associated with having to remain on campus over holiday periods (going home is expensive) when most other people have left. One student also mentioned the closure of campus facilities, such as the medical centre, during holiday periods as a concern.

Among the other difficulties raised by students, several students mentioned the Scottish weather although one or two pointed out that the fact that it was so changeable meant you were always hopeful for a positive change. A few students also raised the often related problem of short dark winter days and how this was a depressing feature for someone more used to tropical chronography of 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of darkness. Finally a number of students mentioned that the various Scottish accents took some time to get used to, however, unlike the weather, you did get used to them.

For one or two students who had come to Scotland with family members this meant additional difficulties such as problems with immigration. Moreover these family members were more likely to suffer from isolation than their studying partners. Often partners and children are less able to communicate in English and are thus less able and confident in interacting in the community. In one or two institutions this problem had been recognised by welfare officers and social groups had been started for the women partners of studying males. Further as already mentioned there are additional hurdles awaiting overseas students with families, for example, finding suitable accommodation and schools for offspring. In one or two

instances students suggested that welfare services were less able to help with such needs.

In a small number of cases students raised points concerning safety. While the majority stressed how safe they felt in Scotland compared to their home countries, a few identified specific concerns. Most of these concerns stemmed from personal experiences in and around the campus, eg local assaults and unruly undergraduates.

Recommending Scotland!

Finally students were asked whether they had enjoyed studying in Scotland and whether they would recommend it to other people from their country.

Students were overwhelmingly positive in their enthusiasm for Scotland and/or their institution.

Yes I love it here! Greek female

I like it here, it is a quiet place good for studying, Scotland is safe and quiet. African male

Many students said that they had already recommended to friends that they should study here.

I do have friends coming here, they've heard so much about me. I've been telling all my friends about Scotland, so they are coming. Most of them are applying to come here to study. Mexican female

Some stressed the friendliness of the local populace, others focused on positive aspects of the educational system or highlighted the advantages of Edinburgh or Glasgow over major English cities.

Conclusion

- The students felt that their academic expectations were being met and were appreciative of the social and cultural aspects of their experience in Scotland. There was a desire for greater exposure to Scottish society and culture.
- A number of factors influenced students decisions to study in Scotland. The most important appeared to be personal recommendations from peers or teachers who had previous experience of Scottish education. Historical links, government-funded schemes, the reputation of particular courses and information supplied by Scottish institutions also had some influence.
- Pre-arrival information packages and induction sessions held at the beginning of the academic session were considered useful and informative, especially when they included detailed facts and information. However, for a variety of reasons, some students did not receive information or missed the induction sessions.
- The students reported positive experiences with student support and welfare services, though some had experienced problems with other agencies, and it was not always clear who had responsibility for dealing with certain problems (such as immigration difficulties).

- Students were aware of the cost of their education and were discerning customers who were generally appreciative of the standard of teaching they received, the attitude of teaching staff to them, and the academic support available, but they were equally capable of criticising resources which they considered inadequate or out of date.
- There were some particular difficulties for students with families, for those who had to stay on campus during vacations, for those who found the Scottish climate difficult to adjust to, and for some students who had encountered problems with immigration, employment or institutional rules or regulations.

There is a great deal of information which educational institutions make available to potential students from abroad. There is additional information available through agencies such as the British Council. All of this information is clearly valued and used by students who are thinking of coming to study in this country. However, a clear message from these students is the importance they attach to word of mouth and personal recommendations from their peers. It would appear that one generation of satisfied students is the best marketing tool that Scottish education can have to attract the next generation. This only serves to reinforce the importance of ensuring that the students are satisfied by their experience. Traditional links with Scotland have also had a part to play in attracting some of them here, as has the reputation of particular courses, institutions, or Scottish education in general.

From what they have told us, it would appear the majority of them are, on the whole, satisfied with their experience of Scottish education. They find Scotland a friendly and interesting place to be and, if anything, wish to know more about its people and culture than they may have the chance to learn. They find their academic experience positive, with teachers who are approachable and friendly. Occasionally some of them have found that facilities are not as modern or as comprehensive as they would have wished, but by and large the teaching has met their expectations. Some have had particular problems with accommodation, or immigration or other aspects of bureaucracy to deal with, and some pointed to particular items of information which would have been useful to them and it is these observations by the students that institutions can learn from. There may also be a more general message about attending to the needs of students who are coming to this country with their families, and providing for students who arrive at times other than the start of the academic year. The information and support provided by institutions was welcomed, as were induction sessions. However, not everything is amenable to change by the institution and in some instances all that the educational establishments can do is make sure that the students are accurately informed about what they will experience (eg the climate).

6: Conclusions

Now is the time to pull together what we have learnt and to provide a general overview of it. Much of what we have had to say has been detailed and particular, and we believe that much of its value lies in this detail. However, the most general, and most reassuring, thing we can say is that after considering all the evidence put before us by the staff and the students in the institutions we visited we believe that Scotland's further and higher education institutions are, generally speaking, doing a good job in providing for the needs of overseas students.

It was apparent to us that the staff's perceptions of the issues surrounding overseas students, and the students' own perception of these issues tended to match one another. This suggests to us that the staff concerned are well informed. It also seemed to us that many of them were going out of their way to be helpful to their students and that they had flexible and pragmatic approaches to solving the problems that students sometimes presented them with.

There were some notable differences between larger and smaller institutions in the ways that they made provision for support of overseas students. In general the smaller institutions, which tended to be monotechnics, attracted fewer overseas students and had less of an institutional infrastructure to support them. While this may seem to put them at a disadvantage, it also meant that they tended to have a more immediate and personal relationship with the students and could support them on a more individual level. The larger institutions required more of an infrastructure with a range of support services to ensure that the students needs were met. It is easier for an individual student to get lost in a larger institution and it seemed to us that the larger establishments were doing their best to overcome this by having a systematic range of support services available. However, some students will inevitably slip through the net, and this did raise the question with us whether the important support in these places might occur at departmental level. We did wonder about the extent to which tutors and supervisors in the departments were aware of the issues surrounding overseas students. While this was outside our remit we did note that some of the student advisers in the larger institutions were taking steps towards providing staff development for those colleagues who had to deal with overseas students.

There clearly are differences between the needs of undergraduates and postgraduates. The undergraduates tend to fit in to established classes and may acquire an informal support network in this way. The postgraduates tend to be older, sometimes arrive with their families, and may be working in relative isolation. They are also more likely to arrive at times other than the start of the academic year.

There is an issue surrounding the timing of induction and orientation sessions for overseas students. Those students who attended them found them valuable, but a significant number had missed out on them, either because they arrived at a 'non-standard' time of the academic year, or because they chose to arrive after they had

taken place to save on the extra costs involved. For some students in further education, their classes may already be underway at the time that orientation sessions run by outside agencies are taking place, and this can make it difficult for them to attend.

All the institutions were providing a range of useful information for overseas students, both before they arrived and on their arrival. The CVCP guidelines were largely being met by all the 'big players' in the overseas students market, both among the older established universities and the newer universities and HEIs. Some of the things which tended to be missed out on (for example, what the institutions could do in the event of international crises) are not (one hopes) frequent needs of students, and may not be the kinds of thing which can be stated in detail in advance. All we can say on this is that at the time of the research economic problems in some far eastern countries were causing difficulties for some students and that the institutions with students from those countries were taking steps to alleviate any difficulties they might be facing.

The students were generally positive about the information they had received. The more common gaps in information which the students tended to identify were in matters of useful, practical detail - things like information about public transport, and detailed costs of different aspects of living here (as opposed to general statements about overall likely costs). The students tended to value detailed, factual and practical information over anything which they might interpret as 'marketing' information.

The other complaint about information arose where students had not received it in advance. Some of these students were from more remote countries, but there was no obvious explanation why they should not have received information in advance. Others were students who had applied late or with a very short time before the start of their course, and it would be much more difficult to ensure that these students received all information in advance. If individual institutions could find some way of monitoring the receipt of the information which they send out they may be able to identify where particular problems are arising. We could not identify any patterns to suggest causes in this research, but that does not mean that a more focused study would not be able to do so.

External agencies were also providing a range of useful support to students. OSPREY and STRATOS have been particularly mentioned, and many students maintain contact with the British Council, but there are also a range of other bodies including the Victoria League and a number of Church-related bodies. Some of these can provide specialist advice and guidance and others can provide particular services, such as arranging host families. Given the desire we encountered among overseas students to learn about Scotland, the Scots and Scottish culture, these activities are to be welcomed. We did, however, wonder if there was a danger of fragmentation of support, and whether some central overview of all these external services should be attempted.

Within institutions there may be a need to monitor the implementation of the CVCP guidelines at departmental level. Some institutions are undertaking their own internal evaluations of the levels of satisfaction among overseas students, but it is by no means universal. We have been shown examples of evaluation questionnaires used in institutions. It has to be said, however, that it is not easy to get some of these students to respond to such evaluations (as we discovered for ourselves in undertaking this research). This may be because many of them are very busy and committed students with other concerns, or it may be for a whole range of cultural reasons, but it is a difficulty which institutions would face.

Some problems are beyond the capability of educational institutions to deal with directly. The particular ones we encountered included problems which students had with funding, and problems dealing with the immigration authorities. While the institutions could, and did, offer such assistance as they were capable of providing, solutions to these problems are not in their hands.

Students and those who fund them are increasingly conscious of the costs of their education and are seeking value for money. Providers of further and higher education are equally conscious of this and, to their credit, and in the view of most of these students, appear to continue to place as much emphasis on the 'value' as the 'money'.

We end by restating the importance that these students attached to personal recommendations of studying in Scotland which they had received from their peers and their teachers. The traditional links between Scotland and some other parts of the world are still a potent force which attract students to come here. Added to this there are more recent formal links and agreements between Scottish institutions and institutions and governments in other countries. All of these ensure that Scottish education has a potential market in many parts of the world. It is now up to Scottish educational establishments to ensure that the next generation of overseas visitors return home with equally good reports of their experiences here. If they continue to do so then they can expect to build upon their existing reputation and the goodwill which exists towards them.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Information request form

Appendix 2: Student proforma

Appendix 3: Questionnaire to SIRP Conference delegates

Appendix 4: Student questionnaire

Appendix 5: Students interview schedule

Appendix 6: Overseas Student Adviser schedule

Appendix 7: International Officer schedule

Appendix 8: Student profiles

Appendix 9a: HE Process and Procedure

Appendix 9b: FE Process and Procedure

Appendix 9c: Process and Procedure HE v FE

Appendix 10a: Content Analysis of HE documentation

Appendix 10b: Content Analysis of FE documentation

Appendix 10c: HE v FE

Appendix 1

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO HELP US?

It would be most helpful to the research team to find out a little more about the kind of procedures/information you have in place for international/overseas students. We would be very grateful if you would answer the following background questions on staffing, information and procedures.

Name of Institution: .....

Staff

Do you have an

- International Office? YES/NO
- International Officer? YES/NO
- And/or member of staff with responsibility for international/overseas students? YES/NO
- International Student Adviser? YES/NO
- Other? (*Please specify*).....

If the International Office/International Officer is within another department or institutional office, please indicate which one:

e.g. Admissions
Student Recruitment
Student Support
Registry
Other? (*Please specify*).....

.....

Information provision for international/overseas students

Do you provide specific information in your Prospectus for international/overseas students? YES/NO

What other information do international/overseas students receive?

- pre-arrival leaflet YES/NO
- international student handbook/guide YES/NO
- welcome pack YES/NO
- other leaflets? (*Please specify*)

.....

.....

.....

Does your institution have a WEB site? YES/NO

Do you provide specific information on the Web site for international/overseas students? YES/NO

Procedures
How does the institution receive new overseas students? If possible, please provide details on the duration of each:

- welcome programme(e.g. 'meeting and greeting') YES/NO

  .....

- social orientation programme YES/NO

  .....

- academic induction programme YES/NO

  .....

- cultural awareness programme YES/NO

  .....

- are there other introductory activities? YES/NO

  .....

What other services are available to overseas students?

.....

Other information

Is there an International Student Club or Association: YES/NO

Is there an international representative on the Student Association? YES/NO

Is there any other relevant information which you wish to provide?

.....

.....

.....

Your help in providing the above information is much appreciated.

Please return to: Overseas Student Project
Scottish Council for Research in Education
15 St John Street
EDINBURGH EH8 8JR

A sae is enclosed for your convenience.

Appendix 2

Institutional Support for Overseas Students
Background information

Thank you for giving us some time today to help us explore some of the questions about the kind of help and support you receive when arriving in Scotland. Before we begin the interview, we would be grateful if you could provide written answers to the following questions.

We assure you that your answers will remain confidential.

Please write down the name of this university or college: _____

Nationality: _____ First Language: _____

Sex(please circle): male female

Age: _____

1 Have you been to Scotland/UK before?*(Please tick)* Yes ____ No ____

2a Please write down the name of the course you are taking:

_____

2b Is the course *(Please tick)*
full-time?
part-time?

2c Is the course *(Please tick)*
undergraduate?
postgraduate?
non-graduating?
other? *(please specify)* _____

2d How long is your course of study?
(Please tick one only)
0-3 months?
4-6 months?
7-12 months?
13 months -2 years?
over 2 years?

3 Who is paying the tuition fees?
(Please tick one only)
family?
self financed?
employer?
government?
British Council?
other agency /sponsor? *(please specify)* _____

4 When did you arrive to start your course?
(Please write in the month and year)

Month ____ Year ____

5 Where are you living?
(Please tick one only)
halls of residence?
family/friends?
rented accommodation?
other?*(please specify)*_____

6 Did you come to Scotland alone?*(Please tick)* Yes ____ No ____

7 If no, with whom did you come to Scotland?
(Please tick as many as apply)
with partner/husband /wife
family/children?
other students from your country?
other ?*(please specify)*_____

Appendix 3

Institutional support for overseas students

Research Project

Funded by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID)

Questionnaire to SIRP Conference delegates

The project

Each year Scotland welcomes a significant number of students from overseas to study at Scottish Universities and Colleges. The Scottish Council for Research in Education has been funded by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID) in association with Scottish Education and Training (SET) to carry out a study of the experiences of overseas students in terms of the information and support they receive. It is hoped that this research will ensure that current institutional provision for overseas students is maximised by offering them the best possible levels of advice and support.

How can you help?

As someone who has been involved in Scottish Higher Education at postgraduate level we would be keen to hear of your experiences. We would therefore be grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete the following questionnaire.

Where can you find us?

We shall be attending the forthcoming SIRP conference in Glasgow on 28th April and you can find us at the SCRE display stand. Please come along and find out more about our project.

Please return this questionnaire either in the attached envelope or in person at the conference.

.....

1 Which University or college are you attending? _____

2 Please write down the name of the course you are taking:

_____

3 Nationality:_____ 4 Age:_____

5 Sex (please circle): male female

6 Who is paying the tuition fees?
(please tick as many as apply)
family?
self financed?
employer?
government?
British Council?
Other agency/sponsor? (please specify) _____

7 Where are you living?
(please tick one only)
halls of residence?
family/friends?
rented accommodation?
other? (please specify) _____

8 Did you come to Scotland.....
(please tick one)
alone?
with others (please specify) _____

CONTINUED ON OTHER SIDE →

We are interested in finding out about your satisfaction with the level of support and advice you have received since coming to Scotland.

9 To what extent did your experiences of support and advice meet your actual needs? *(please give details)*

10 Please give examples of what you thought was most helpful:
(eg. welcome pack information, social/cultural events, advice services)

11 Please give examples of what you thought was not helpful:
(eg. lack of information, poor advice, lack of opportunities to meet other students)

12 How could Universities and Colleges best improve the services/support on offer to students from your country?

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your answers will contribute to the ongoing process of improving the services on offer to overseas students.

For further information please see the enclosed leaflet or contact Sheila Hamilton or Stuart Hall at SCRE on 0131 557 2944.

Appendix 4

Institutional support for overseas students

Research Project funded by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department(SOEID)

Questionnaire

The project

Each year Scotland welcomes a significant number of students from overseas to study at Scottish Universities and Colleges. The Scottish Council for Research in Education has been funded by the Scottish Office in association with Scottish Education and Training (SET) to carry out a study of the experiences of overseas students in terms of the information and support they receive. It is hoped that this research will ensure that current institutional provision for overseas students is maximised by offering them the best possible levels of advice and support.

How can you help?

As an overseas student in a Scottish university/college we would keen to hear of your experiences. We would therefore be grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete the following questionnaire. **Please return this questionnaire** in the attached envelope.

Which University or college are you attending? _____

Nationality: _____ First Language: _____

Sex (please circle): male female

Age: _____

1 Have you been to Scotland/UK before? *(Please tick)* Yes ☐ No ☐

2a Please write down the name of the course you are taking?

_____

2b Is the course *(Please tick)* full-time ☐ part-time ☐

2c Is the course *(Please tick)* undergraduate ☐ postgraduate ☐ non-graduating ☐
other? *(please specify)* _____

2d How long is your course of study? *(Please tick one only)*

0-3 months ☐ 4-6 months ☐ 7-12 months ☐ 13 months-2 years ☐ over 2 years ☐

3 Who is paying the tuition fees? *(please tick as many as apply)*

family ☐ self financed ☐ employer ☐ government ☐ British Council ☐
Other agency/sponsor? *(please specify)* _____

4 When did you arrive to start your course?
(Please write in the month and year) Month _____ Year _____

5 Where are you living? *(please tick one only)*

halls of residence ☐ family/friends ☐ rented accommodation ☐
other? (please specify) _____

6 Did you come to Scotland alone? *(Please tick)* Yes ☐ No ☐

7 If no, with whom did you come to Scotland? *(Please circle as many as apply)*

with partner / husband / wife / family / children / other students from your country
other *(please specify)*_____

CONTINUED ON OTHER SIDE ->>

We are interested in finding out about your satisfaction with the level of support and advice you have received since coming to Scotland.

8 To what extent did your experiences of support and advice meet your actual needs?
(please give details)

9 Please give examples of what you thought was most helpful?
(eg welcome pack information, social/cultural events, advice services)

10 Please give examples of what you thought was less helpful?
(eg lack of information, poor advice, lack of opportunities to meet other students)

11 How could Universities and Colleges best improve the services/support on offer to students from your country?

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your answers will contribute to the ongoing process of improving the services on offer to overseas students.

For further information please see the project leaflet or contact Sheila Hamilton or Stuart Hall at SCRE, 15 St John Street, Edinburgh EH8 8JR Telephone: 0131 557 2944

Appendix 5

Institutional Support for Overseas Students **Students' Interview Schedule**

We would like to find out more about why you decided to come to Scotland to study, and what you have experienced since you have arrived.

A Pre-arrival

1. Why did you choose to study in Scotland?
Reputation of Scottish education system
Good reputation of the institution
Wanted to study in a safe country
Wanted to get good value for money
Wanted to experience Scottish culture

2. Why did you choose to study here at _____
Recommendation from family/friends /other student(s)
Recommended by school/college
Read about it in article/brochure/directory
Saw an advertisement

3. How much did you know about the institution before you arrived?
Pre-arrival booklet
Family/friends/other student(s)
British Council etc
What did you find most useful?
What did you want to know more about?

B Arrival

4. Can you tell us what happened when you arrived?
Meeting and greeting (airport/station)
Help with immigration procedures
Institutional welcome(arriving at the university/college)
University/college formalities (eg matriculation)
Other formalities (eg registration with police)

5. What help did you receive with accommodation?
Organised pre-arrival?
Social and cultural expectations (food, distance to travel, isolation, etc)

6. Once you settled in after your arrival, what kind of introductory sessions did you have?
Trips/tours
Talks/lectures
Social/cultural events
Other?

7. What did you find most useful?

8. What did you want to know more about?

C Continuing support

9. Do you have regular contact with the (international students' office/student adviser)?
Do they contact you, or you them?
Do you know where to go for help?

10. Can you think of a time when you found the student support services helpful?
Has there been a time when you felt you did not receive help?

11. What kind of support is on offer as regards English language?
Satisfactory?

12. Do you have regular contact with other students from your country?
With other overseas students, with home students. Are you in a group from your country?
Have you met people in the local community(eg of same nationality?)

D Final comments

13. What do you particularly enjoy about living and studying in Scotland?

14. Are you having any particular difficulties?

15. What would you say to a friend thinking of studying in Scotland?
Positive/negative?

We would like to find out more about the role of the overseas/international student adviser (or...(alternative title).....)

We assure you that all your responses are confidential.

A. Role of the International Student adviser

1. Can you briefly outline your role in relation to providing support for overseas students?
Under which 'institutional' department /student association?
Liaison with other International office staff?
(Regular/ infrequent?)
Pre-arrival? (Marketing, recruitment)
On arrival? Meeting and greeting
Orientation session/welcome
Cultural awareness programme
Introduction to student services
Accommodation

2. What is your role in providing ongoing support for overseas students?
Social?
Pastoral?
Support for spouses and families?
Integration or separation?

3. In relation to resources, can you tell me a bit about .....?
Training needs?
Current budget?

4. What is the relationship between the 'institutional' side and the student body?
Links with student association/overseas student adviser?
Division of roles and responsibilities?
Liaison ?
Meeting needs of specific groups? (profile/ cultural differences)
Is there an International Student Club or Association?

B. Information provision for international/overseas students

5. What information do you provide specifically for overseas students?
Information in general prospectus?
Pre-arrival leaflet?
Welcome pack?
International student handbook/guide?
Other leaflets?
Web site?
Video
(and contents?)

B. Ongoing support/evaluation/monitoring for international/overseas students

6. What other agencies /individuals provide support?
e.g. tutor, student 'buddy', students' association, peer group, external agencies

7. Do you foster links with the local community?
In what way?

8. Do have a system for student feedback on the service you provide?

9a. Can you identify specific areas of concern to overseas students?

9b. To what extent do these vary across different groups/nationalities?
Cultural differences?

10. What's working well?
From pre-arrival through to ongoing support

11. What's not going so well?
From pre-arrival through to ongoing support

12. Any final comments?

Appendix 7

Institutional Support for Overseas Students **International Officer Schedule**

We would like to find out more about the kind of procedures/information you have in place for international/overseas students.
We assure you that all your responses are confidential.

A. Institutional support for overseas students

1a. How much importance does the institution place on the recruitment of international/overseas students?
Strategy?
Geographical targets?
Particular departments targeting particular groups?

1b. Could you briefly outline the institutional support structure for overseas students?
(Confirm, for example, that there is an international office/officer?)
Is it independent/ part of another department?
Links with recruitment services?
At semior executive level, who has responsibility?

2a. What is your role?
Pre-arrival? (marketing/recruitment/information)
On arrival? Meeting and greeting
Who does the 'meeting and greeting'(staff, student volunteers, or both)?
Liaison with other institutions (e.g. reception stall in the station/airport)
Orientation session/welcome/induction
Cultural awareness programme/social
Introduction to student services
Accommodation

2b. What is your role in providing ongoing support for overseas students?
Social?
Pastoral?
Support for spouses and families?
Integration or separation?

3. In relation to resources, can you tell me a bit about .....?
Training needs?
Current budget?

4. What is the relationship between the 'institutional' side and the student body?
Links with student association/overseas student adviser?
Division of roles and responsibilities?
Liaison?
Meeting needs of specific groups? (profile/ cultural differences)
Is there an International Student Club or Association?

5. What is the reception strategy? Integration or separation?
Cultural awareness programme
Local community contacts

6. What is the strategy for academic induction? Integration or separation?

7. What arrangements are in place for ESL?

B. Information provision for international/overseas students

8. What information do you provide specifically for overseas students?
Information in general prospectus?
Pre-arrival leaflet?
Welcome pack?
International student handbook/guide?
Other leaflets?
Web site?
Video
(and contents?)

9. What is particularly successful?
Format and content?

75

10. Can you identify any deficiencies in the information which you provide?
Format and content?
Timing of issue?
Remedies?

11. Do you take advice on content from outside organisations?
eg OSPREY/STRATOS/ UKCOSA?
Formal/informal contact with these organisations?

C. Evaluation and monitoring
12. Do you have a system for student feedback on the service you provide?

13. Can you identify specific areas of concern to overseas students?

14. To what extent do these vary across different groups/nationalities?

15. What is working well?
From pre-arrival through to ongoing support

16. What is not going so well?
From pre-arrival through to ongoing support

17. Any final comments?

Appendix 8: Student Profiles

Student Responses

Student Nationality	Interviewed	Returned a Questionnaire	S.I.R.P.	Total Number of Students
North American	10	3	0	13
Latin	10	5	3	18
Caribean	2	2	0	4
African	9	7	3	19
Middle East	8	2	2	12
Indian Sub-continent	7	3	7	17
Asia	27	14	9	50
East Europe	4	3	3	10
Non-Eu	4	2	0	6
EU	17	1	1	19
Australasia	0	5	0	5
Totals	98	47	28	173

* **The EU students are mostly made-up of English Language students attending FE colleges.**

Student Age

Student Age	Number of Students
Under 21	27 (16%)
21-25	52 (30%)
26-35	66 (38%)
Over 35	28 (16%)

Student Sex

Student Sex	Number of Students
Female	91 (53%)
Male	82 (47%)

Students Stage of Study

Student Stage	Number of Students
Undergraduate	63 (36%)
Post-graduate	97 (56%)
Non-graduating	13 (8%)

* Of the 63 undergraduates, 28 are English Language students from FE colleges.

* These figures include four spouses of overseas students interviewed, as well as 11 SIRP respondents from institutions outwith the survey.

Appendix 9a: HE Process and Procedure

	A	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	Total
International office	1		1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	12
International officer	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1		12
Staff member responsible	0		1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1		11
Int. Student Advisor	0		1	1	1	0	1	0		0		1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	8
O.S info in prospectus	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	17
Pre-arrival leaflet		1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	14
O.S handbook/Guide	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	16
Welcome pack		1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1		1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	13
Web-site	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	19
O.S info on Web-site	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0		1	1	1			0	1	1	14
Welcome programme	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	17
Social orientation prog	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	16
Academic induction prog	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	16
Cultural awareness prog	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0			0	0	1	0	1	1		7
Other introductory activities		1	1			1		0	1	1			0	0	1	0	1	0	1	8
International Student assc	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	12
International student rep	1	1		1	0	0	1	0	1	0		1	0	0	1		1	0	1	9
Total	10	10	16	15	14	11	16	9	15	9	9	15	8	7	16	2	13	12	14	

***This grid shows the processes and procedures within institutions, with a 1 indicating that the corresponding process is present, a 0 indicating that it is not and no entry showing that the institution did not provide us with that information.**

Appendix 9b: FE Process and Procedure

	a	b	e	f	i	j	k	Total
International office	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	3
International officer	0		1	0	1	0	1	3
Staff member responsible for O.S.	1	1	1	1	1	1		6
Int. Student Advisor	1	1		0	0	0		2
O.S info in prospectus	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Pre-arrival leaflet	1	1		1	1	1	1	6
O.S handbook/Guide	0		1	1	0		1	3
Welcome pack	0	1	1	1	1	1		5
Web-site	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
O.S info on Web-site	0	1	1	1	0	0		3
Welcome programme	0	1	1	1		1	1	5
Social orientation prog	1		1	1		1	1	5
Academic induction prog	1		1	1		1	1	5
Cultural awareness prog	0		1	1		0	1	3
Other introductory activities	1	1	0	1		1		4
International Student assoc/club	0	0		1		0	1	2
International student rep	0	0	0	0		0	0	0
Total	8	10	12	13	6	9	11	

***This grid shows the processes and procedures within institutions, with a 1 indicating that the corresponding process is present, a 0 indicating that it is not and no entry showing that the institution did not provide us with that information.**

Appendix 9c: Process and Procedure HE v FE

	HE Established		HE Post '92	HE Monotechni	FE
	From 7		From 4	From 8	From 7
International office		7	4	1	3
International officer		5	4	3	3
Staff member responsible for O.		5	4	2	6
Int. Student Advisor		6	2	0	2
O.S info in prospectus		7	4	6	7
Pre-arrival leaflet		4	3	7	6
O.S handbook/Guide		7	4	5	3
Welcome pack		5	3	5	5
Web-site		7	4	8	7
O.S info on Web-site		6	3	5	3
Welcome programme		7	4	6	5
Social orientation prog		7	3	6	5
Academic induction prog		6	4	6	5
Cultural awareness prog		5	0	2	3
Other introductory activities		3	2	4	4
International Student assoc/clut		7	4	1	2
International student rep		5	2	2	0

***This grid compares the processes and procedures in place within different areas of the Higher and Further Educatio sectors. From 22 HE institutions 19 responded to our request for informatio , as did 7 of the FE colleges contacted. See table 3.1.**

Appendix 10a: Content Analysis of HE Documentation

	CVCP Guidelines to institutions	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	R	S	T	U	V	
INFORMATION	Courses offered,Qual required	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	20
	Academic requirements, Eng Lang.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	20
	Application Procedures	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	20
	Tuition Fees (Incl Bench fees)	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	16
	Regulations on paying fees	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	15
	Accomodation-cost,application,allocation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	17
	Academic and non, support esp for O.S.	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	16
	Institutes equal opportunities policy	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	13
	Advice on financial assist,incl sponsorship	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18
	Vacation institutional services	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
	UK immigration and entry requirement	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	14
	Employment rules for non-nationals	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	10
	UK health provision and insurance	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	19
	Police service,drugs legislation etc	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	11
	UK culture advice,daily life,living costs	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	16
	Ref. to external guides from UKCOSA and B.C.	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	11
ACADEMIC	Study skills-essay writing,research methods	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	11
	Level of Eng Lang.	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	16
	Assessment of need for Lang tuition	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	16
	Provision of language support	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	18
	Info on institutions assessment & examination	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	11
	Study support for the above.	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	13
SUPPORT	Accomodation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	18
	Arrival arrangements	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	12
	Info on living in the UK	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	18
	Orientation/induction programme	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	14
	Medical provision	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	19
	General counselling/welfare guidance	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	17
	Personal safety/security guidance	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8
	Child care facilities	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	11
	Info on availability of facilities for disabled students	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	16
	Religious and dietary requirements	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	13
	Details of financial assistance available	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	16
	Info on International crises	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Recreational facilities	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	19
	Info on Vacation periods	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	19
	Careers guidance	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	13
	Re-orientation support for home-goers	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
ADDITIONAL	Climate Information	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	11
	Maps	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	19
	Provision for Families	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	10
		35	36	23	38	40	38	29	33	17	31	17	22	28	32	9	37	19	29	31	38	

*This grid, using a simple 1 for yes and 0 for no, indicates the availability of information to overseas students through institutional documentation.

Appendix 10b: Content Analysis of FE Documentation

	CVCP Guidelines to Institutions	a	b	e	f	g	i	k	Total
INFORMATION	Courses offered,Qual required	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
	Academic requirements, Eng Lang.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
	Application Procedures	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
	Tuition Fees (Incl Bench fees)	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	5
	Regulations on paying fees	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	5
	Accomodation-cost,application,allocation	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	6
	Academic and non, support esp for O.S.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
	Institutes equal opportunities policy	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	4
	Advice on financial assist,incl sponsorship	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
	Vacation institutional services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	UK immigration and entry requirement	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	6
	Employment rules for non-nationals	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	3
	UK health provision and insurance	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
	Police service,drugs legislation etc	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
	UK culture advice,daily life,living costs	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	6
	Ref. to external guides from UKCOSA and B.C.	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
ACADEMIC	Study skills-essay writing,research methods	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	5
	Level of Eng Lang.	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	5
	Assessment of need for Lang tuition	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	5
	Provision of language support	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	5
	Info on institutions assessment & examination	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Study support for the above.	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	6
SUPPORT	Accomodation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
	Arrival arrangements	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	4
	Info on living in the UK	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	6
	Orientation/induction programme	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
	Medical provision	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
	General counselling/welfare guidance	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
	Personal safety/security guidance	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Child care facilities	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	6
	Info on availability of facilities for disabled students	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
	Religious and dietary requirements	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
	Details of financial assistance available	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	6
	Info on International crises	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Recreational facilities	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
	Info on Vacation periods	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	6
	Careers guidance	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	4
	Re-orientation support for home-goers	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
ADDITIONAL	Climate Information	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
	Maps	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
	Provision for Families	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	3
	Totals	29	31	27	37	26	26	24	

***This grid, using a simple 1 for yes and 0 for no, indicates the availability of information to overseas students through institutional documentation.**

Appendix 10c: HE v FE

		HE Established		HE post '92	HE Monotechnic	FE
	CVCP Guidelines for Institutions.	From 7	From 6	From 7	From 7	
INFORMATION	Courses offered,Qual required	7	6	7	7	
	Academic requirements, Eng Lang.	7	6	7	7	
	Application Procedures	7	6	7	7	
	Tuition Fees (Incl Bench fees)	6	6	4	5	
	Regulations on paying fees	7	6	2	5	
	Accomodation-cost,application,allocation	7	6	4	6	
	Academic and non, support esp for O.S.	6	5	5	7	
	Institutes equal opportunities policy	6	2	5	4	
	Advice on financial assist,incl sponsorship	7	5	6	7	
	Vacation institutional services	2	2	0	0	
	UK immigration and entry requirement	6	6	2	6	
	Employment rules for non-nationals	6	3	1	3	
	UK health provision and insurance	7	6	6	7	
	Police service,drugs legislation etc	5	5	1	5	
	UK culture advice,daily life,living costs	6	6	4	6	
	Ref. to external guides from UKCOSA and B.C.	4	5	2	3	
ACADEMIC	Study skills-essay writing,research methods	7	2	2	5	
	Level of Eng Lang.	7	6	3	5	
	Assessment of need for Lang tuition	7	5	4	5	
	Provision of language support	7	6	5	5	
	Info on institutions assessment & examination	7	2	2	1	
	Study support for the above.	7	3	3	6	
SUPPORT	Accomodation	7	6	5	7	
	Arrival arrangements	5	5	2	4	
	Info on living in the UK	7	6	5	6	
	Orientation/induction programme	7	5	2	2	
	Medical provision	7	6	6	7	
	General counselling/welfare guidance	7	5	5	7	
	Personal safety/security guidance	5	1	2	1	
	Child care facilities	5	4	2	6	
	Info on availability of facilities for disabled student	7	4	3	5	
	Religious and dietary requirements	7	5	1	3	
	Details of financial assistance available	7	5	4	6	
	Info on International crises	2	0	0	1	
	Recreational facilities	7	6	6	7	
	Info on Vacation periods	7	6	6	6	
	Careers guidance	7	3	3	4	
	Re-orientation support for home-goers	2	0	0	1	
ADDITIONAL	Climate Information	6	4	1	5	
	Maps	7	6	6	7	
	Provision for Families	6	4	0	3	

***This grid compares the institutional provision of information between different areas of the Higher and Further Education sectors. From 22 HE institutions 20 responded to our request for documentation, as did 7 from 11 FE colleges. See table 3.1.**

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